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ALEX MC GILLIVRAY, THE WHITE LEADER

THE WHITE LEADER

BY

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER

Author of "Silent Scot, Frontier Scout"; "Pioneers of the Old Southwest"; "Adventurers of Oregon," etc.

Illustrations by

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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1927

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Set up and electrotyped.
Published September, 1926.

Printed in the United States of America by
THE FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY, NEW YORK.

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THE WHITE LEADER

THE WHITE LEADER

CHAPTER I

THE SPANISH MAN'S LETTER

"LACHLAN, laddie!"

The boy glanced up from the rifle he was cleaning.

"We're hittin' the trail to-night," his father continued. Ross Douglas' rugged face was grave as he stood looking down at his son. He went on, "Jim's had a letter from the Spanish Man."

Lachlan's brilliant light-gray eyes kindled. He tossed a wave of his ruddy hair off his brow and said, with a trace of excitement in his voice, "Hittin' the trail is grand news for me, Ross Douglas. For I'm goin' fair crazy wi' bein' cooped up i' Nashville so long. 'Tis become a jail to me. I'm terrible excited, too, about the letter from the Spanish Man that's Governor o' Louisiana. What's his name again?"

"Miró."

Lachlan did not speak again for a few moments. He was busy putting the last touches to his rifle. With the greasy fluid of crushed green hickory nuts he carefully smeared all the metal, so that it could

not give back glints under the sun or moon or from the flicker of a camp fire and thereby betray him to some Indian of the small bands which lurked constantly in the vicinity of Nashville. The precaution Lachlan was taking in itself told the story of those days in Middle Tennessee. No part of the frontier, not even Kentucky, went through the continuous bloody agony which was meted out to the Cumberland settlement during the Revolution and afterwards. Under the leadership of James Robertson, "Jim" as Ross had called him, the small group of settlers and traders stood firm in what was practically an incessant Indian war. When the Revolution ended, they had expected that the Indians —who, they believed, were set on them solely by the British—would withdraw. Where, except from the British, could the Creeks, for instance, get ammunition? But, instead of ceasing, the Indian attacks had increased. The Creeks had made alliances with the Choctaw and the Cherokee—in fact, with all the southern red men except the Chickasaw. The Chickasaw had signed a peace with Robertson through their honorable chief, Opimingo. Inspired and led by the terrible half-white Creek chieftain, Alexander McGillivray, the allies had all but wiped out the white men of the Cumberland. At last, from Opimingo, Robertson had learned enough to make him suspect that this Indian confederacy was encouraged, financed, and supplied by Governor Esteban Miró, of Louisiana.

When America and Britain made peace, the settlements in Kentucky and Tennessee became the special objects of foreign intrigue. Neither Spain nor France, which were still powerful feudal nations under the rule of the Bourbon cousins, wished to see American democracy spread and become strong. They agreed that the Appalachian Mountains should forever be the western boundary of the young Republic. But Americans had already crossed the high mountain chain and made settlements in the West. Therefore they must either be driven out, or they must be induced to forsake their allegiance to America and come in under the banner of Spain. To this end, French and Spanish agents worked among the Indians, who already hated the settlers for having built homes and forts on their hunting grounds.

"What's the Spanish Man's game?" Ross Douglas had asked the old scout, Kaspar Mansker, only a few days ago.

Kaspar had slowly shaken his leonine German head and answered: "Only vot I know is vot is *my* game. Here I am und here I stick!"

That was the answer of Nashville generally. They would not flee from scalping knife, torch, nor tomahawk. They would stand their ground, or perish.

"It's verra bad times we're in, Lachlan, my laddie," Ross Douglas said presently. "Ay, 'tis bad. This mornin' Opimingo came in. He says some Creeks an' a white man were followin' him

an' meanin' to kill him, he thinks; but he gave them the slip over yonder in the woods."

"Why did they want to kill him?" Lachlan asked. "Just Injun nature?"

"He thinks not. He says the Creeks came to his town wi' the white man that said he was a trader. Oh, ay, he had strouds an' beads to show. But what they really came for was to bring a message from McGillivray."

Lachlan looked up, his eyes flashing with startled interest. "What does the White Leader want wi' Opimingo?"

"Nothin' much but to join wi' him an' his Creeks an' their friends, the Choctaw, an' the Lower Cherokee. Wi' Opimingo an' his Chickasaw they'd make a big army. An' then, says McGillivray, they'll wipe out Nashville first, then Watauga an' Franklin an' every American settler in a' Tennessee—that's all. Nothin' much!" his father informed him with grim humor.

"An' what did Opimingo tell them?"

"Oh, he talked clever to them, as crafty as he could, an' said he'd have to think it over. But he says they suspected he might sneak over here an' tell Jim. The Injuns all know Opimingo's a man o' his word; an' they know he made treaties wi' Jim when the British made them wi' Benjamin Franklin an' the rest o' our fine lads 'way yonder i' London—or it maybe was Paris? An' so they likely guessed right that Opimingo would feel bound by his honor

to tell Jim what was intended by the White Leader an' his flock o' bloody feathers."

Lachlan nodded. "Does Opimingo think the Spanish Man is puttin' McGillivray up to it?"

"Well, he says 'twas Spanish trinkets mostly the trader had wi' him, like them he brought Jim afore. But any lame-toed fox wi' one squint eye could tell ye that McGillivray needs no Spanish Man to put him on to killin' Americans."

"Father, what's the reason the White Leader hates us so black?"

Ross Douglas shook his head, his brows drawn together in a thoughtful frown. "Nobody knows. But ye're right when ye call it black hate, lad. Black as night is the soul o' Alex McGillivray towards the Americans; an' his hands drippin' wi' our blood; an' him always reachin' for another bucket to soak them in."

"Yet he's got a white man's blood in him, judgin' by the name."

"Oh, ay. But likely his father was some worthless low cur, half-Injun himself maybe. Ye know, lad, how there's traders—an' traders! Some's decent, clean, honest white men——"

"Like Ross Douglas," said his son promptly.

"Oh, ay," said Ross, nonchalantly, his eyes lit with a humorous glance. "An' there's others, low whites; or, what's worse, low whites wi' a big slice o' bad Injun in them. An' I take it that the White Leader's father must have been that sort. A bad lot, ye see. An' that likely accounts for the bloody

nature o' Alexander McGillivray as well as for him havin' a white man's name. 'Twas a sad day for Tennessee settlers that saw that red mongrel become chief o' such a large an' warlike nation as the Creeks! Jim believes the Spanish Man is helpin' McGillivray. An' 'tis the mtwo fiends that's sendin' us out on trail to-night. I feel bad about it, laddie." He put his hand over his son's briefly, then withdrew it. "For 'tis more'n likely we'll never get back alive, even if we get to the far place Jim's sendin' us. I don't care for mysel'," he added.

"Well, Father, that's nothin' new i' the Cumberland," was all Lachlan said. It was true. Death had walked with men as their own shadow, in that lonely district of Middle Tennessee, for the past half-dozen years.

"Seems to me I ought to be doin' somethin' better for my only son an' child than leadin' him into one danger after another," said Ross, with a troubled look. There flashed across his mind a poignant memory of the Scotch Highlands, of green misty hills, a peaceful cot, bands of gently moving, cropping cattle or the smaller, whiter bodies of sheep, coming and going in a tender ghostly calm through the violet-gray wet haze, a tinkle of bells; and a pang smote him that he could not give his son a boyhood of safety among those loved hills.

"I'm thinkin' there's nothin' better for a boy than jus' learnin' to be a man; for a man's what I'll get to be, an' nothin' else, if I live long enough. So 'tis best I'm forced to learn now," was Lachlan's very

practical answer. "Is it the letter from the Spanish Man that's made Jim send us out?"

"Ay. 'Tis the letter. The Spanish Man says in it that Jim's all wrong in thinkin' he's i' cahoots wi' that devil, the White Leader. Says the Spanish Man, he's full o' friendship for Jim an' all o' us. An' to prove it, says he, this letter's an invitation to us to come in under the banner o' Spain an' forswear the States. What good can the States do us, says he, when they're so far off to the east o' the mountains? Join wi' Louisiana, says he, an' take the oath o' allegiance to the King o' Spain. An' then, says the Spanish Man, he'll send troops to talk to Mr. McGillivray."

"H'm," mumbled Lachlan, "h'm."

"Oh, ay," his father nodded. "Ye can see the way o' it."

"Ay. If we'll turn Spanish, he'll call off White Alex. An' if we won't, why then he'll keep on feedin' McGillivray an' his six thousand Creeks all the powder an' tomahawks they can swallow. Eh?"

"Ay, lad—till there's not one American settler left i' the Cumberland; an' maybe till they've cleaned out eastern Tennessee, too."

"An' what is it Jim wants us to do, you an' me?"

"We're goin' to try to get through to Watauga wi' a letter to John Sevier."

"Oh, ay." The boy's eyes lighted up gleamingly. "He'd sure be sendin' word o' it to Nolichucky Jack! From the time they started Watauga together

before the war, Jim an' Sevier have loved each other like brothers."

"'Tis natural they should. They're two o' the finest men ever put on this earth. Jim says 'tis a big Spanish plot to seize the whole o' the western country, Tennessee an' Kentucky, too. An' he wants Sevier to send word o' it into Kentucky to Isaac Shelby that's gone there now. Shelby's an old chum o' Sevier's. They fought at King's Mountain together, where they killed the Wolf, Ferguson."

"Ay," Lachlan nodded. "Cousin Andy MacPhail used to tell me about how he once met Ferguson at a battle i' Pennsylvania. 'Twas the year they fought at King's Mountain that we came here wi' James Robertson. I'm thinkin' if the Spanish Man had seen Jim on the trail that year, he'd not be sendin' silly letters to him, writin' him to turn traitor jus' to have an easy time!"

Ross Douglas smiled. Lachlan saw the smile, and laughed. They were both thinking of James Robertson's strong, heavy-set body, his large, powerful head, his unsmiling, rather stern, yet not unkindly face, his slow speech and economy of words which seemed to enhance his outstanding quality of immovableness. It was impossible to think of James Robertson as being turned, alive, from any purpose to which he had dedicated himself.

"Jim's got the worst fault o' all Scotchmen," said Ross. "The Scotch never know when 'tis time to give in."

"Ye're jokin'," his son charged him, reprovingly. "For I know that, mysel', an' I'm only a lad yet."

"Ye do? Well, tell me then, what ye consider the time to give in." He regarded the boy curiously.

"The time is never," Lachlan informed him cheerfully. His gray eyes sparkled. Ross laughed.

"Ye trapped me!" he said. "For I sure thought ye'd found out the one wise thing yer race has never discovered yet. Jim will never give in to the Spanish Man, nor to the White Leader. So he's for warnin' Sevier an' askin' him to come, or to send men to help us if possible. We need help sorely."

"Well, Father, we'll go an' get help, you an' me. I'm not fearin', an' I know ye're not, save for yer boy. Tis a long trail to Watauga an' maybe 'tis crossed somewhere by the White Leader. But bein' rocked to sleep wi' tomahawks isn't a bad lullaby for men; an' 'tis almost sure to be the end o' a trader in this country sooner or later. So, if 'tis sooner 'stead o' later—" he rose and stretched his arms over his head. "I'm not worryin'," he added, with a yawn.

"We ought to have another man along," said Ross. "But there were no volunteers. An' the truth is, too, there's none to be spared."

"I'll go an' tell Blue Arrow to come wi' us," Lachlan answered, starting off hastily.

"Lachlan!"

The boy paused and looked back.

"We need a man an' we need him bad," Ross

said. "But maybe 'tis walkin' straight to death to trust that redskin."

"Blue Arrow's all right. Rusty likes him." Rusty was Lachlan's hunting dog. Lachlan always declared that Rusty had more sense than most men.

"A dog can be mistaken," Ross said doubtfully.

"Ay. But ye know we've got to have a third man. An' Blue Arrow'll go, if I ask him. That's what comes o' findin' a redskin half dead from wounds an' hunger, off there i' the brush, an' fetchin' him home on my back. I don't doubt I've got Blue Arrow on my back for the rest o' my life!"

"That may not be long enough for him to begin to lie heavy on ye, lad." The troubled look settled like a cloud on Ross Douglas' face again. "Laddie, I've never been a fearfu' man, nor one that's always thinkin' about death an' ghosts an' such. But I've got a chill on me about this trip to-night; like somethin' was tryin' to tell me here's terrible sorrow ahead o' me."

"Ye've been doin' sentinel duty too long. Ye need sleep. Doze off for a couple o' hours. I'll get our stuff ready an' call ye in time for a good supper afore twilight. To tell ye the truth, I'm keen for the trail, whatever we meet on it! I've been shut up i' this little fort so long, I'm smothered —like a mouse sewed up i' a flour sack. I'm about ready to *eat* my way out!"

He shook his fist playfully at his father and bounded off, whistling. Ross watched him out of sight.

" 'A thousand shall fall at thy right hand; it shall not come nigh thee,' " he murmured a line from the Psalms, never far from the lips of the Scot. "Oh, Lord, save the laddie!"

Yet, though a dark apprehension had settled on his own spirit, and though the perils of the venture in prospect were so great that disaster seemed almost certain, neither Ross Douglas nor his son thought of refusing to go. Not even to save his boy would Ross have forbidden Lachlan to do the duty which the time, and the needs of his fellow-settlers, demanded of him. As a matter of fact, even Ross' command would not have restrained Lachlan from taking the dangerous trail with his father. Since his mother's death, when he was six, Lachlan had gone wherever Ross went and shared his every hazard.

Lachlan found Blue Arrow busy splitting kindling for Mrs. Robertson. The young Indian paused for an instant to stroke Rusty's foreleg, somewhat awkwardly; because the dog had run up to him and thrust its nose against his hand. He did not look up at Lachlan nor answer his "How-d'y."

Lachlan stood silently beside him, studying his scarred and unhandsome face and thinking there was little wonder that the settlers were not attracted to Blue Arrow. The Indian's countenance had a gloomy, even sullen cast, though the black eyes were mournful rather than fierce.

"He always looks like he was broodin' over somethin'," was Lachlan's thought.

That brooding look of Blue Arrow's repelled men. In their experience the brooding Indian to-day was the killing savage to-morrow. Several in Nashville had said openly that Lachlan should have left the Indian to die where he found him, and not have brought him into the fort. How, they asked, had he been wounded? Most probably by one of the settlers when he was raiding their settlement with his fellow Creeks! That he was a Creek, Blue Arrow had admitted.

"Well, the rest is easy guessin'!" they said.

Lachlan had no excuses. He just couldn't leave a wounded human being to die of starvation or the fangs of wolves: and he couldn't shoot a lone, wounded Indian, even if that Indian were a Creek. There had been nothing for him to do, being the sort of boy he was, but to hoist Blue Arrow on his back, bring him to safety, and nurse him into health. Lachlan did not pretend that he knew anything that was in Blue Arrow's mind. He only saw what the others saw; namely, a morose, taciturn savage keeping to himself as much as possible, never asking for food even if he knew it was being prepared in this or that cabin, and only obtruding when there was some job to be done which he understood, like chopping kindling or tanning hides or making new ax handles. Probably he was industrious, thought Lachlan, because he felt that his sole chance of life was to make himself useful. But there was the odd fact that Rusty liked him: and Rusty, like all settlers' dogs in those days, hated Indians. Of course,

Rusty was no beauty himself; and he was rather taciturn and undemonstrative, too, and nobody but his young master thought particularly well of him.

"Maybe he feels a sort o' sympathy for Blue Arrow," Lachlan thought. He noticed the Indian's awkward, almost timid way of stroking the dog's paw or his flank, instead of patting his head as a man used to dogs, and liking them, would do. The gesture told, of itself, how utterly unaccustomed Blue Arrow was to any expression of tenderness or even of comradeship.

Haltingly, partly in bad Creek and partly by signs, because Blue Arrow knew hardly a word of English, Lachlan told him of the journey in prospect. Without waiting to be bidden, the Indian said he would go, too. Lachlan explained, unnecessarily, that it would be very dangerous. Blue Arrow agreed, but stated that he, himself, would be safer on trail with Ross and Lachlan than left behind in the fort without them. If the Creeks came down in a raid, he said, the settlers would almost surely kill him first, fearing that he would open the gate or kill Robertson or otherwise serve his tribe from within. In the last raid, all that had saved him had been Lachlan's protection, and the fact that he, Blue Arrow, had crouched close at Lachlan's side, greasing his bullets and handing them to him. Yes: he would go—he preferred to! On trail a man had, he said, at least the same chance as a hunted rabbit; "here, no."

"Well, Lachlan, so you're leaving us to-night."

The boy turned quickly to answer the greeting. James Robertson and Kaspar Mansker had come up, with the noiseless tread which even huge men, like Mansker, and heavily built men, like Robertson, learned quickly on the frontier.

"I vish dot Injun vos oud of here," said Mansker.

"He's goin' wi' us," said Lachlan, briefly.

"Den look oud for your scalbs," answered the old scout, shaking his head. Lachlan smiled. He liked Mansker. Indeed, all the boys and young men admired the famous scout. They loved to hear tales of his early wanderings in Kentucky before a cabin had been built there, in the days when he had been one of the Long Hunters and the friend of Daniel Boone.

"We need him," Lachlan replied.

"I can't spare you a white man in his place," said Robertson. "There is this comfort for you, lad; you'll be in no more danger than those of us that stay here. We daren't let the roofs dry, for fear that any night the Creeks'll be here throwing torches on to them. The Spanish, too, are fiends of cruelty, bent on destroying us all. And the biggest devil among them is that half Spaniard, half Frenchman, half Scotchman, and altogether Creek scoundrel, McGillivray!"

"Do ye know why the White Leader hates us so?" Lachlan asked. "I can't get over that. It seems queer to me."

Robertson made a negative gesture. He and Mansker shook hands with the boy and moved off.

Lachlan bade Rusty and Blue Arrow follow him and started for the cabin. He saw his father asleep inside. Tiptoeing silently, he gathered up their rifles, ammunition, blankets, and their small hoard of jerked beef; and, with Blue Arrow's help, he loaded the pack horse. The men would walk; for they could go more silently afoot and hide more securely. It would have been safer for them if they could have done without the pack horse. But they had to take food enough for three men for a good many days, because they would not dare to hunt until they were almost at their journey's end, lest the crack of a shot betray them to a wandering band of the White Leader's allies. If they came suddenly on Indians, there was the likelihood that the redskins would try first to secure the pack horse for whatever it carried; and this would give skilled frontiersmen a chance, at least, to make off.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTERIOUS LONE CAMPER

In the first dark, three dim, human figures, with a horse and a dog, slipped out of the stockade, and were swallowed up in the density of the forest shadows. According to Ross' orders, Lachlan went ahead with Blue Arrow behind him, while Ross himself marched behind leading the horse. Ross did not put the young Creek in the lead because, if Blue Arrow were not loyal, he might then dart off into the woods and possibly set some roving band of his tribesmen on their trail. Nor would he trust him in the rear, lest he slip away there, too, or suddenly shoot or tomahawk the white man in front of him. Ross determined to keep Blue Arrow between them, where he could watch his every move. That spectral fear still clustered thickly about Ross Douglas' heart, like the black gloom of the starless night about the forest trail. The intelligence and the courage of the man, and he had much of both, seemed helpless to shake it off.

Yet it was from Blue Arrow that the first warning of danger came.

"Huh!" with a low grunt Blue Arrow leaped forward and gripped Lachlan's arm. He swung

round quickly to Ross and, pointing into the blackness, grunted again. "Huh!"

The white men at first could see nothing; then, after a few minutes, they realized that there was a fire somewhere below the forest, probably on the river shore, because a faint suggestion of color thinned the farthest blackness.

"Injun," said Blue Arrow. Then he added in Creek, which Ross understood a little, as he had traded with Creeks in a brief lull of peace: "It must be a big camp or we could not see the upper light of the fires so far off. We must leave this trail and go north over the rocks. We must travel only at night and hide in the rocks in the daytime. That is no hunting camp. It is a war camp."

"You see, Father?" said Lachlan. "Blue Arrow's all right."

"Creek war camp, you think?" Ross asked.

"No. I think Chickamaugan. Creeks don't come by boat."

"He's probably afraid for his own scalp, too," said Ross. "The fact that McGillivray is sending emissaries to the Chickamaugans wouldn't stop any one of those river sharks from scalpin' a lone Creek anywhere he met him by way o' cheerin' himself up!"

"That's true," Lachlan admitted. "Do you know McGillivray?" he asked Blue Arrow suddenly.

"Huh. Better not talk," was all the answer he got. Blue Arrow pushed ahead now and assumed the lead, saying that, some distance in the

direction he was taking, there was an old war trail which the Cherokee had used before the redoubtable Chickasaw had driven them out of Middle Tennessee. There was nothing to do but to follow him. Lachlan did so trustingly enough. But Ross Douglas felt a chill tremor pass over his body, as he turned into the dark unknown, at the heels of this morose savage, the White Leader's tribesman.

They were still in the forest when dawn broke; so they did not camp but pushed on, halting only once to rest and to eat a frugal meal of their jerked beef. The next day found them in more open country marked by ridges of clay and rock, the steps of an ascending plateau. Now they traveled only by night, because there was little cover to screen them from the keen-eyed foe, if he should be within seeing distance. It was dangerous travel, beset with sudden gullies and small precipices.

On the fifth night out, Ross Douglas missed his footing and fell into a shallow ravine floored with loose rock. Lachlan plunged down after him. But he had to call Blue Arrow to come and help him carry his father out; for Ross had injured his shoulder and one ankle very severely. His leg collapsed under him, when he attempted to stand. They made camp and waited for dawn, which was only an hour or so off.

With the light, came a vision of help. Looking down from the height where they lay among boulders, invisible to all eyes but those of a hawk hanging in the sky over them, they saw in the distance

below the farther wall of the ravine a wide creek playing between grassy shores and, at its edge, a small tent.

"There are no Injuns 'round, or one man wouldn't camp like that in the open," said Lachlan. He continued to watch and presently saw a rider come through the leafy trees, cross the stream, dismount and hobble his horse. The boy could make out, for an instant, a tall figure in frontiersman's garb carrying a rifle. As he looked, the man pulled off his deerskin cap, tossed it aside, stretched his arms over his head and then threw himself down on the grass. These were a white man's gestures! The mysterious camper had barely touched the grass before Lachlan was sprinting down the cliff.

"You stay here with Ross and keep Rusty with you," he called blithely to Blue Arrow. It was good to know that aid was so near at hand, and that there were no lurking savages to prevent him from getting it.

On the far side of the ravine, which inclined gently enough to the creek, Lachlan found himself among trees again, with a rough tangle of underbrush. Having no longer need of silence, he crashed through till he reached the wide sward that ran along the creek's edge.

"Hallo!" he called.

The lone camper was already on his feet; for he had heard the noise Lachlan made in getting through the forest.

"Hallo!" he answered, and moved a few steps

forward to meet the boy. "And what do you want, my lad?" he asked. "And where do you come from? For the hill here does not usually vomit copper-headed boys."

Lachlan was too breathless for speech, but he would not have answered frankly at once in any case. The man might be an honest hunter who would give help; or he might be a bandit who would steal their pack horse and even shoot if they protested.

"I was on a long hunt an' I got lost," he panted. "Who are you?" There was no answer for a moment, and the two eyed each other thoughtfully. Lachlan was looking at the tallest man he had ever seen, though the men of his own people were generally tall. The camper was about six feet three or even more, finely proportioned, erect, with a proud carriage. His abundant hair was a soft, dark brown. His face was strikingly handsome, the features being chiselled as finely as if done by a great sculptor. His eyes were so remarkable that Lachlan's gaze quickly came back to them and fixed there. They were, to begin with, disproportionately large for his slender, aquiline face, and they were set very deeply in his head. They were very dark and, had they been duller, would have appeared black; but they burned, rather than shone, with a sombre fire that seemed to send off tawny flashes as his look traveled over the boy's face and body. Lachlan's first response to them was a sort of pleased fascination. They were extraordinary

and beautiful eyes, and they reminded him vaguely of others he had seen somewhere—he tried to remember where—not another man's—no—a lynx's? a wolf's?—not that any lynx or wolf ever had such large eyes, nor of that color—yet— Then suddenly his smiling pleasure vanished in such a sudden and terrifying sense of imminent death as he might have experienced if a wolf and not a man were poised in front of him to spring at his throat. For, without being able to reason about it or even name his thought, he became conscious in that instant that the sombre fire in those extraordinary eyes was hate, ferocity, madness perhaps, unbridled and lusting for blood.

"Who are you?" he almost gasped.

The man turned towards the leafy coppice on the other shore and gestured. Then, even as Lachlan saw feathered Indians spilling out, like an immense covey of partridges rising, the man said in his coldly smooth, cultured tones, with their faint trace of Scotch accent:

"My name is Alexander McGillivray."

"The White Leader." The words fell from the boy's lips mechanically.

"I see you have heard of me. That will make explanations unnecessary."

He spoke in Creek to his followers. Stupefied with horror, Lachlan heard him ask them what torture they preferred to inflict on their prisoner. And, having glutted their cruelty to the full, by what death should this boy die? In the flames?

"The fire! the fire!" was the cry.

The cruelest test of courage which ever came to men, white or red, in the Indian country had come upon Lachlan Douglas; and, boy though he was, he prepared to meet it with the fortitude of a brave man. These fiends might glut themselves on his suffering; but they would not see him fear. Here to-day was the end of the Douglases, father and son. He could envy rather than pity Ross, who would probably die swiftly under one blow of a tomahawk wielded by Blue Arrow, the traitor, who had guided them to the Creek encampment. At first, Lachlan had been in terror that Blue Arrow would emerge from the bushes to betray Ross' presence to McGillivray. Now, it seemed evident that Blue Arrow had decided to keep the loot—the horse and pack—for himself. Since to save his father was as impossible as to save himself, Lachlan determined to try to hasten his own end and escape the fire by so enraging his captors with insults that they would attack him with their hatchets. Failing in that, he could meet the flames, surely, with no less dignity than many a red warrior before him.

"Halfbreed," he said insolently to McGillivray in his stumbling Creek, "why have you and your Creeks no war paint? So that if you met three white men, instead of one boy, you could pretend to be hunters and escape a fight? The Chickasaw say truly, 'There are two cowards in the forest, the weasel and the Creek!'"

There was a snarl of rage from the Creeks.

McGillivray's eyes flamed, but he answered coolly, in English:

"We were on our way to make a peace treaty with John Sevier; therefore we did not paint our faces for war. After the peace treaty and the friendly vows in Watauga we were going to the Cherokee towns to make a war pact. Then we would return with the Cherokee to visit our new white brothers in Watauga. Once inside the fort, we would kill every white man, woman and child. But now we are going home; because we have heard that some men have gone to Sevier to warn him of our purpose. So a Chickamaugan told me yesterday."

Lachlan surmised that a scout from the Chickamaugan camp, which they had sighted the first night out, must have found their trail later and made this guess at the purpose of their dangerous journey. He spat on the ground in the Indian fashion of showing contempt.

"What is more vile than a halfbreed? Only a Creek halfbreed!" he sneered, in the Creek tongue.

At that an Indian rushed at him with uplifted tomahawk; but the White Leader restrained him.

"That is what he wants, a swift death," he said. "You are a fool, Tustunnuc. Bind him to that tree and pile the wood around him, but only as high as his knees. All Americans shall die, because I will not cease from war while one lives. But the American who calls me 'halfbreed' shall die slowly."

"By what name should I call you?" Lachlan shouted, struggling desperately in the rough hands

of the Creeks, hoping always to rouse their ire, or even McGillivray's, beyond control. "Halfbreed is the only name your worthless father gave you! Son of a coward!"

He was startled into silence by the effect of his words on McGillivray. Indeed, even the Indian hands gripping him slackened their hold from the shock. The White Leader's tall, powerful physique jerked as if from the long thrust of a knife, and he emitted a hoarse cry. He stared helplessly at the boy, with eyes that were like the eyes of a wild beast in agony in the steel jaws of a trap. His voice was husky and unsteady when, at last, he spoke.

"You will light to-day a memorial fire to the man you have slurred." He drew close to Lachlan, who was now tightly secured to the tree and stood in silence a moment, looking down at him sombrely. "The red hair, like red gold; and the gray eyes like sun glancing off the clean, steel blade of a knife . . . ever since I looked at you, a secret voice has been telling me to let you live. But, no. I have made a vow. The voice must tell me something more before I dare break my vow. I am no superstitious fool to listen to I know not what! What is your father's name? I will send him word to tell him the end of his son—a burnt sacrifice in Indian flames." He stared gloomily into Lachlan's eyes, then continued, "His lot is happier than my father's, whose son was given up to a worse sacrifice. And your lot is happier than his son's; because

you will suffer only a few hours' torture and then receive the blessing of death."

Lachlan stared back at this strange being—fiend or madman, he did not know which—who, even at this dread moment, exercised so tremendous a fascination over him. Then he asked:

"Did somethin' verra terrible happen to yer brother?"

"I had no brother," curtly.

The man must certainly be insane, Lachlan thought, to say his father had lost a son through a more horrible form of sacrifice than fire, and then say he had "no brother!"

McGillivray gestured towards the faggots, and a Creek began to light them.

"What is your name?" he repeated.

The boy, watching the spurt and running trail of fire, answered mechanically:

"Lachlan."

McGillivray's hands shot out and gripped his shoulders.

"You lie!" he cried hoarsely.

"My name is Lachlan," the boy repeated steadily. The flames were running faster now, responding to the little breeze that ruffled the grasses on the bank of the brook.

"Lachlan! Lachlan!" the man repeated like one demented. "And what else? Speak!"

Lachlan shook his head. He would not mention Ross' name; because there was always the faint chance that Blue Arrow had not killed him before

stealing the horse. If Ross lived, Lachlan did not want him ever to know of his son's horrible death.

"The red hair, the gray eyes, and the name! Lachlan! The voice knew. What was that voice? *His,* perhaps." McGillivray's tone was one of awe. "Lachlan McGillivray is your name. The voice knew!"

He drew his knife and slashed Lachlan's bonds, and quickly lifted him out of the mounting circle of flame.

"Put out the fire," he ordered, in Creek. "The Muskogee cannot burn their chief's son."

"The White Leader adopts the young paleface?" asked the warrior whom McGillivray had addressed before as Tustunnuc.

"Yes. This is Lachlan McGillivray, my son. Break camp. We go."

A few minutes later, Lachlan, his body suddenly gone limp from the terrible strain he had passed through, was lifted into the arms of McGillivray, who had already mounted, and was borne at an easy gallop across the stream and into the forest, southward bound for the beautiful country of the Creeks.

"The same hair and eyes, the same name." He heard his strange captor murmur the words again, as his head dropped helplessly on McGillivray's breast.

"Who had the same hair and eyes and the name of Lachlan?" he queried dully, in a faint voice.

He heard a long heavy sigh, like a sob, almost tear through the chest where his cheek rested, and

felt the arm that held him—strong as iron and lithe as a willow—tighten spasmodically about him in an embrace of anguish and tenderness.

"My father, Lachlan McGillivray. The most foully wronged of men."

"Where is he?" Lachlan whispered.

Again he felt that profound sigh heave through the man's breast. The White Leader's tone was low and infinitely mournful as he answered:

"God knows. Only God knows."

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF A WARRIOR

THE country of the Creeks, into which Lachlan entered as the son of Chief Alex, comprised most of Georgia and Alabama. From the lowlands of the south, which were in part stretches of sand, of bogs, and of meadow, it sloped gently northward over broad plateaus and valleys to a series of broken bluffs—the last echoes, fixed in stone, of that mountain epic, the Appalachians. It was a green country; from the vivid emerald of its grassy sod and the olive and jade of its leafy trees to the more sombre hue of the pines and cypresses rolling like waves of dark wintry sea-green here and there across the ridges and along the edges of miles of brighter green sward. And all this glorious verdure was laced and threaded, spattered and shot, with shining streams. Like broad ribbons of silver, their pure surfaces hardly touched by man, the larger rivers—Coosa, Tombigbee, Chattahoochee, Mobile and Alabama—curved through the living green tapestry, receiving the waters of literally hundreds of creeks of all sizes, from broad, quiet brooks, which mirrored the green shade of their banks, to small foamy rills no wider than a boy's palm. The territory had been

christened by its waters, *Muskoki,* meaning Creeks. This is an Algonkin word and, presumably, had been given as a name to the country by French Canadian traders of Algonkin blood. The word had become *Muskogee* in the Creek tongue. Their own word for *creek* was *hatchee.* And their own name for themselves was *Abihka.* It signified a pile of scalps covering the base of the war-pole.

An early legend said that long ago the Abihka had been driven out of their home far to the south by a stronger nation: and that, after long wanderings, they had arrived in this earthly paradise where the scene and the climate were perfect, and the deer so abundant that the muted drumming of their hoofs was always in the air. Then the chief who had led them through all their hardships, looking on the peace and plenty offered by this new land, thrust his spear into the earth and cried, "Al-a-bama!" or "Here I rest!" Students of Indian languages tell us that this is not the meaning of *Alabama,* and, therefore, that the incident never happened. But the story has its value, even if it be only a legend; because it sprang out of the soil, inspired by the beauty of the land.

These wanderers from the south or west had absorbed whatever peoples they found in that vast territory and had now become the Creek Confederacy of the Four Nations with a central government which was, to some extent at least, acknowledged by all their tribes. They had about forty towns and villages situated chiefly on the Coosa, Chatta-

hoochee and Tallapoosa rivers and their smaller tributaries. Here and there through the prevailing green, on some specially favored bankside over sparkling water, the clusters of houses, made of logs and plastered with red clay, glistened like mounds of roughly cut carnelians. A hint of gold among low-growing leaves told of squashes ripening in the fields.

Lachlan had visited several of the major towns with McGillivray, to be welcomed by the headmen as the White Leader's son. In spite of his fears for his father, left helpless in the hands of the treacherous Blue Arrow, his spirits began to rise. The beautiful country entranced him. Under its influence even his fears for Ross vanished, and he began to believe that, like himself, Ross also had miraculously escaped. Yet there was no reason for his change of mind except the green and crystal woodland with its flashing colored wings and its bounding deer which, like gestures of hope, beckoned the boy out from the darkness of dread.

Though he had escaped the flames, he was none too safe. He was a white boy, the only one of his hated race in a country of Indians who numbered several thousand warriors. His life was wholly at the mercy of the powerful quarter-breed chief, whose fiery eyes had the look of madness at their centers. But Lachlan took the true frontiersman's view of a dangerous situation, as an exercise for his wits. Even here the quick mind would be worth more to him than the quick trigger finger. And

if death came again and could not be turned aside, he could at least meet it without flinching. There must be some way, he thought, in which he could make his captivity serve his friends in Nashville. Perhaps he could persuade McGillivray to cease his bloody raids on the Cumberland settlement.

Lachlan soon had plenty of time to muse over this idea. For immediately on reaching the end of his journey, he was placed alone in a cabin on the outskirts of the town to begin his initiation into the ranks of the young warriors. The cabin was open across the whole front and contained only a wooden slab which was his bed. His feet and most of his body were naked. His diet was scant: only a little meal mixed with water which was brought to him once a day by Okee, the little daughter of the Great Warrior, or general, of the Creek army. The general was that Tustunnuc who had almost tomahawked him. Little Okee was given a very high honor when she was appointed to wait upon Lachlan and the other youths of his age who were undergoing the same experience in their separate cabins.

This vigorous treatment and the solitude were supposed to induce dreams. The Indians thought a great deal of dreams. If an Indian dreamed of flying to the moon he got as much credit from the others as if he had really winged through the sky and roosted on the silvery rim of Luna. And whatever he reported that he had seen there became a part of the scientific data treasured by his tribe!

For a short time on certain days these youths might associate with one another, but no one else might approach them. Even Okee was not allowed to speak to them when she set their frugal fare before them. The White Leader himself could not visit his adopted son, who was supposed to be imbibing much wisdom from the spirits by means of hunger and chill, if not actual cold, a hard plank bed and fantastic dreams.

Though the ordeal was unpleasant enough, Lachlan did not suffer under it. He had borne worse privations on the trail with Ross; especially during the years of the war, when they had marched in hunger and cold for days, not daring to fire a shot at a deer because of Indians, nor to light a fire to dry their clothing soaked by heavy rains. Having a practical head on his young shoulders, he used the opportunity in trying to make friends with the four other boys; because it was possible that their friendship, which would win him also the goodwill of their elders, might serve him in the hour of need. Lachlan did not trust McGillivray's sudden affection for him. The fact that he had red hair and the same Christian name as Chief Alex's father seemed to him too slender a thread to hang upon safely. And, as to McGillivray's "secret voice," Lachlan knew the capricious nature of such companions! The same spirits who told an Indian to-day to spare a life, to-morrow would say, "Kill." In short, the counsel of the spirits was usually, "Do as you please, brother. If you want that chap's scalp badly

enough, take it. If you don't particularly care about it, why then, leave it on him!"

Lachlan entered into his new friendships from policy, but almost immediately one of them became quite genuine. He took an immense fancy to a boy named Wewoca, which, translated literally, means Barking Water. Wewoca had been named in honor of some noisy falls that broke the flow of a stream near his village. It was on the third day of his initiation that Lachlan discovered this new friend. The five youths had sat for an hour together, reciting their dreams of the preceding night with religious solemnity. Lachlan still stumbled badly in grammar; but he was always able to convey his meaning, sometimes by calling in the aid of a Creek word-book which McGillivray had compiled, and which Lachlan had studied busily ever since his arrival. The other boys moved off, but Barking Water remained squatting on the ground near him. He was a thick-set youth of very dark skin, with a decided kink in his hair and a large and ready smile. There was a good deal of African blood in Barking Water, and it showed plainly in his irrepressibly jolly disposition as well as in his hair, his round rolling eyes, his throaty voice and his thick laughing lips.

Tapping his chest, he said:

"Iste Semole."

Now while this literally meant "wild man," Lachlan knew that Wewoca was really informing him that he was a Seminole. Many years before, some

of the tribes of the Creek Confederacy had drifted to the southeastward, given up agriculture entirely and become merely hunters. So the more civilized Creeks called them the Wild Men, or the Seminole. The Seminole had opened their hearts and hunting pastures to scores of black slaves fleeing from their Spanish masters in Florida and from their English masters in Georgia and even South Carolina. The wealthy townsmen among the Creeks owned black slaves, too: but among the nomadic Seminole the negroes were not slaves but tribesmen in good standing.

"You are a long way from home," said Lachlan.

"A Wild Man's home is everywhere," Barking Water answered philosophically. "And I am not so far as you think. For my mother was a Creek from Tuckabatchee, a kinswoman of the Great Warrior, Tustunnuc. My father was called Black Thunder from his color and his fierceness. He was very big, with hair that curled like a sheep's. His hair and his skin were as black as swamp soil. He was also very happy when not at war or angry; and his peace name was Big Laugh. He had a mark on his neck and another on his ankle, where there had been iron which he had broken. The Spanish captured him again. Then my mother said to me, 'The same thing will happen to you if you stay here, because you look like your father.' So she sent me to my uncle, Tustunnuc."

"Then I suppose that you, too, hate all the people of my race?" Lachlan said inquiringly. Barking

Water looked about carefully to see if any one of the other boys was within earshot.

"Fortunately they have gone back to their cabins to meditate on the meaning of the dream I told them. I told a good dream on purpose, to get rid of them. Also because I was angry with Bilka for telling a dream about a roasted deer. My empty stomach creaked with jealousy and hunger. To tell the truth, I don't think much of this thin meal and water we are getting. However, we were talking of white men, and you asked me if I hated them all, didn't you?"

Lachlan nodded.

"I felt sure I had remembered your question correctly. Because that is what caused me to look around to see where Bilka and the others were. And that, again, is what caused me to take up the subjects first of dreams and then of food. It is my nature to do so. I begin to speak of something; and immediately I think of something else connected with it; and that again causes me to think of other things; and all these things are very interesting and must be mentioned. So that in the end it frequently happens that the people who listen do not know in the least what I am talking about. Nor, as a matter of fact, do I myself. Unless some one present is able to remember what it was that started me off."

"It was your hatred of my race," said Lachlan, stifling a chuckle.

"So it was. You are very clever to have remembered that all this time. I shall like you better

because you are clever." Barking Water grinned at him expansively. He lowered his voice. "The truth is that I only really hate Spaniards; for my father's sake. Because, you see, the white people you belong to do not come into the swamps and forests of the Seminole and build towns and drive away the game. Therefore, I have no reason to hate them. But you must never tell that to the Creeks, who are friends with the Spaniards; or Tustunnuc will have me whipped with hickory twigs, or scratched with twisted briars. Which would be unpleasant," he added as an afterthought.

"I won't tell," said Lachlan, smiling. "I, too, hate the Spaniards because they set the Creeks on my people."

"So you see it is not really at all strange that we should be already such great friends," Wewoca continued; "though you are *iste hutke* (white man) and I am *iste semole*. I am so black that I can't call myself *iste chate* (red man), but I don't mind, because I have my color from my father who was a great man. Only a very great man could make people turn blue and shake with fear one moment; and, the next moment, fall on the ground screaming with laughter. Because he could do these two things, my father was undoubtedly the greatest man who ever lived; since there can be nothing in the world more remarkable than this power," he concluded complacently.

Lachlan agreed with him cheerfully. He was having no end of fun out of his new friend.

"It is great luck for you that the White Leader chose you for his son instead of burning you," Barking Water went on. "I have heard all about it. It is because you have hair like fire or red clay and the same name as his father who came from far off, from a place called Shalleeson (Charleston) and became a very great man among the western Creeks. He always said that the Creeks must be good friends with his white people. And so did the White Leader tell the Creeks 'be friends' for many years. Then the white people did something, I don't know what, but it was a great wrong, to *Laklan Chate* (Red Lachlan). And for that the White Leader hates all your people and will never cease from warring against them. Yet his own blood is more white than red."

"Wasn't his mother pure Creek, so that he is half Indian?" Lachlan asked.

"Though I like you, I see that you are very ignorant of many things. No. His mother was Sehoy, the daughter of a Creek woman, whose father was a *Flenchee* from the south." By this Barking Water meant a Frenchman from Louisiana. "And Sehoy's mother was the daughter of a Spaniard from the same place. And all these women were named Sehoy: and so is the White Leader's sister, who considers herself a very great princess and much too grand to marry even Tustunnuc though he asked for her. She says she will marry only a Spanish *Micco* (King). But, so far, no *Micco* has

come asking for her; and I am sure none will, because she is no longer young."

"Do you know a man named Blue Arrow?" Lachlan asked.

Wewoca's round eyes rolled with excitement. "Now you have asked me again of something about which I know everything! That is excellent. At this rate you will soon become wise and well-filled with information, with which you, in your turn, can instruct others. Yes; I know Blue Arrow. He is a kinsman of the White Leader, but that is not mentioned here. He had to run away after the last *Boosketah*——"

"What is the *Boosketah?*" Lachlan wanted to know.

"Do not interrupt me; for the *Boosketah* makes me think of so many interesting things that, if I speak of it now, the danger is that I shall never leave the subject to speak about Blue Arrow. He drank too much of the *ace,* the Black Drink which the Creeks make from the *cassina yupon.* And, being at all times a cross and sullen man, he became much worse and stabbed another Creek, named Willogee. Then he fled; and Willogee's kinsmen followed him and overtook him far north in Tennessee and there killed him. The funny thing about it is that, when they returned, they found that they need not have taken all that trouble: because Willogee was not dead. He lives still and is just the same except for some scars."

"Now *I* can tell *you* something, Wewoca, which you do not know."

Barking Water looked at Lachlan doubtfully, shaking his head. "I cannot imagine what you can tell me that I do not already know. For, from the beginning, it is I who have given all the information. Nevertheless, I will listen to you."

"Blue Arrow also is not dead."

"What do you say?" Wewoca's round eyes nearly popped out of his head.

"No. He is alive." Lachlan went on to relate the whole story of his dealings with Blue Arrow. To his surprise, Barking Water was presently rolling on the ground on his stomach, emitting roars of thick chocolatey darkey laughter. "What are you laughing at?" Lachlan demanded.

"Oh, ho! Haw, haw, haw! I never heard anything so funny. Why don't you laugh? Well—ho-ho-ho—you are *iste hutke* and perhaps your race is solemn. But I am my father's son—haw-haw-haw—and therefore I know—ho, ho—when something is funny. To think of Blue Arrow fleeing for fear of the murder penalty—since the Creeks never pardon a murderer—and all because he had killed a man who was not dead—haw, haw! And Willogee's kinsmen rushing off immediately after him all the way to Tennessee, which is a long trip, you know, to take blood vengeance for Willogee who wasn't dead in the least—hee, hee-e-ee. And the kinsmen coming home to tell of killing Blue Arrow, who you now tell me—ho, ho—wasn't dead in the

least either; and finding the dead Willogee sitting up chewing the roasted tail of a hickory shad from the creek—haw, haw—and then being obliged (since they had killed a man in vengeance who didn't deserve it) to undergo all sorts of fasts and purifications to appease his spirit—which was still in his body, you tell me—hee, hee, heehaw, huh-uh-uh——"

Wewoca gave up trying to talk and rolled and bounced about on the ground like a huge, black ball with some queer, husky, chortling mechanism inside it. At last he sat up, wiping the dusty tears from his face.

"Oh, if my father were only here," he almost sobbed. "There was a man who could laugh! Everything amused him but Spaniards. And I am exactly like him." After a while, when he had fully recovered, he said, "Blue Arrow will perhaps learn of Willogee's recovery. In that case he can come home for the next *Boosketah;* which will take place as soon as our initiation is finished."

"What is the *Boosketah?*" Lachlan asked again.

"Ah, the *Boosketah!*" Barking Water rolled his eyes in ecstasy. He rubbed his hand over his stomach. "For one thing, there is food! But that is not all, though it is very much. The *Boosketah* comes soon after midsummer; when there are nuts of the *echee-ub* (hickory tree) and squashes and fruit and honey. It is the noble thankfeast of the Creeks. It lasts for eight days in the large towns. Ours will last eight days. Besides all manner of

good things to eat, which I, in particular, shall appreciate, there will be different dances. When I am well-fed I can dance all night without getting tired, just as if I were a full-grown warrior. What I love best is the last dance which ends the *Boosketah.* It goes on all night and one can shout as loudly as one likes and jump as high as the roof. Because it is called the *Obungah Hahjo,* the Mad Dance."

"But, tell me, Wewoca, why do you think Blue Arrow will come here for the *Boosketah?* Won't he be in danger still from Willogee and his kinsmen? Because, after all, he *almost* killed him."

Barking Water leaned forward and gave Lachlan a condescending little pat on the arm. "Laklan Chate—for so I shall call you, unless the White Leader objects—how fortunate you are to have made a friend of me! Because I know all the things of which you are ignorant, and I am kind and do not mind instructing you. For an hour, now, I have poured out my knowledge and my wisdom to you, like water from a pot that has no bottom and is therefore never dry. Since it is my nature to speak of many things at once, I will first tell you how I know that there is nothing in the world so marvelous as the *Boosketah.* Do you wish to hear?"

"Yes, of course I do, Wewoca," Lachlan said quickly.

Wewoca smiled, pleased. "I have already told you that I am of the Seminole. Well, then, you realize that I am a great traveler. For I have trav-

eled across most of the world from the Seminole country to the Mississippi and back to this town. And on my journey I saw many wonderful sights; but nothing so wonderful as the *Boosketah*. That is how I know that the *Boosketah* is the most wonderful thing in the whole world. And now you also know it; because I have informed you." He patted Lachlan's arm again.

"Thank you," said Lachlan. "Now tell me about Blue Arrow."

"To be sure. Well then, according to the Creek custom, the *Boosketah* wipes out the memory of all offences except murder. Therefore, if Blue Arrow returns on the last day of the *Boosketah* or immediately afterwards, every one—even Willogee and his kinsmen—will greet him like a good friend who has come home. Though, if he comes at night, Willogee's kinsmen will think it is his ghost—hee, hee—haw—hee-e."

Presently he gave Lachlan a very searching look. "Laklan Chate, did you believe it when you heard me tell my dream to-day—about the squirrel as big as a fox that ran along the oak tree balancing the moon on his tail?"

"H'm," Lachlan drawled thoughtfully. "Let me ask you something more, Wewoca, since you pity my ignorance and are so kind about answering questions."

"This pot has no bottom and never runs dry," Wewoca replied invitingly.

"Then tell me, did you believe it when you heard

me tell my dream about the miles of bulrushes which turned to bleeding arrows and then shot up into the air as lightning?"

Barking Water leaned forward and gripped Lachlan's shoulders.

"Laklan Chate," he said, "you are my own brother and I love you."

The two young scamps grinned shamelessly at each other.

"Isn't it the funniest thing in the world that Bilka should be, at this very moment, searching for the interpretation of our dreams?" Wewoca continued, with a chuckle. "To-morrow he will solemnly tell us what they mean. Bilka has told me that after he has taken a scalp or two and won his *Tussekiochifkee*——"

"What is that?"

"Again I instruct you. It is the war-title given to a Creek the first time he is present when scalps are taken. Well, then, as soon as Bilka has received his *Tussekiochifkee,* he says that he will give up war and become a Medicine Man. He feels that his talents lie that way. I assure you that, some day, your bleeding bulrushes and my moon-tailed squirrel will become part of a medicine chant to cure some foolish old woman of the toothache."

"Then we shall have done good," Lachlan grinned.

"Yes. But, nevertheless, the Creeks, though they are a great people, have many foolish notions. A

wise man cannot help laughing at them. This initiation, for instance. How absurd it is! Now, with the Seminole, a man becomes a warrior by the simple method of going out and killing some one. Not by dreaming silly things on an empty stomach. And, as to curing sickness by Bilka's kind of medicine, the Seminole, who are intelligent, would laugh at it. My father's race taught us the only real medicine. It is to beat a drum by the sick one's head loudly and continuously till the evil spirit goes away or the sick one dies. Which is the only sensible way."

"Undoubtedly," said Lachlan, politely.

"Since I hate the Spanish, and you also hate them, we have still another reason for being friends. We can, perhaps, help each other to get revenge. But the White Leader is very intimate with them and even, on occasion, wears the foolish clothes of their warriors. So we must never speak of this to any one else." He rose, stretched himself, and yawned. "I must go to my own cabin now, for I see, away off there, little Okee coming with our thin meal and water. I used to like the child, but now I detest her. I have never eaten human flesh; because, in the Seminole country, one can always find alligators. Nevertheless, certain thoughts howl through my hollow stomach like wind through a cave when I see Okee, that fat buttery little *padjee* (pigeon), hopping solemnly to my door with her dish of detestable slops. The one happy thing in all this is that, in a short

time, we will have the *Boosketah,* and I can then stuff meat and honey and corn and nuts into every aching chink in my vast hungry emptiness. To-morrow, Laklan Chate."

He smiled amiably and strolled off to his cabin.

CHAPTER IV

THE PACT OF THE THREE KINGS

THE period of initiation ended at last. With shouts of delight Lachlan and Barking Water raced naked down the bankside and leaped into the mellow waters of the creek. The other boys followed them less noisily. When they had bathed and splashed about to their hearts' content, they ran to their several homes to dress and paint themselves in festive fashion for the great feast. The *Boosketah* had arrived.

"Be sure to remain beside me and to do everything exactly as I do it. Then you will make no mistake, because I never make any," Barking Water counseled Lachlan as they parted on the bank. For which advice Lachlan thanked him.

At the chief's house Lachlan was told that the White Leader was at the council hall. Zambo, one of McGillivray's retinue of black slaves, met him at the door and took him through the hall to the room which was to be his. There he found a beautiful, new, fringed deerskin suit, touched up with embroidery and beads, a pair of moccasins ornamented with bright feathers, and a rich head-dress. There, too, were the red, blue and yellow paints for

his face. After decking himself in a manner becoming a young Creek chieftain, Lachlan took a look over his new home before setting out for the council hall.

It was a large one-story cabin of logs and red clay, divided into several rooms by partitions without doors, so that all the rooms on each side of the hall opened into one another and into the hall. The walls inside were of logs, plastered with clay between, and hung here and there with skins and antlers. The furniture ranged from plain Indian benches and stools to carved Spanish mahogany chairs. McGillivray's desk was a beautiful example of Spanish art. Near one end of it stood a magnificent old Spanish chest in which he kept valuable papers, money, and his jewels. There were well-filled bookcases against the walls. On the desk the most conspicuous articles were a quill pen, dyed vermilion, with a tiny jeweled band around it, and a huge silver inkwell set with turquoises, amethysts, and garnets; and a miniature mounted within a gold and glass, box-like frame. The miniature was the portrait of a dashing and extremely handsome youth of about Lachlan's age, dressed in the costume of a French courtier of about the year 1760. One glance at the remarkable eyes was enough to tell Lachlan that it was a painting of the White Leader. Among the ornaments on the wall there were some pictures and a piece of writing. The latter proved to be a trading license issued in 1740 by the Governor of South Carolina to Lachlan McGillivray, of Charles-

ton. One of the pictures was a faded pencil sketch of a log trading house with the word "Augusta" under the drawing and the date "1760." Lachlan could easily guess that this was the elder McGillivray's frontier post at Augusta, Georgia. The other picture was a crudely drawn head, in colored chalks, of a shaggy, red-headed man with light eyes and a forceful heavy jaw. It was drawn on a beaver skin. Words were written along the top of the skin in ink: *"Iste - Laklan - chate - lige - osetah - chemis-te-chaugo."* He spelled the phrase out carefully and translated it: "Lachlan, the Beloved Man of the Four Nations."

He was still looking curiously at the crude portrait of the man whose name and coloring had saved his own life so strangely, when Zambo came to tell him that McGillivray had sent for him. He hastened out, and, hearing drums beating not far off, went towards the sound. Presently he entered a square made by the *chooco-thlucco* or Big House. This was a group of four buildings facing—as nearly as the Creek mathematicians could gauge by the heavens—north, south, east and west. The buildings were square one-story structures, forty feet long by sixteen deep with walls eight feet high and domed roofs. They were made of logs and plentifully plastered with red clay, which took on the glaze of brick under the sun. Here and there, about the doorways chiefly, rough ornamentation had been attempted in the shape of jagged bits of granite, marble, and quartz embedded in the clay.

The fronts were open, like piazzas, with two rows of seats covered with reed mats extending the full width. The space in the back was divided into three rooms. One house was the chief's; but McGillivray seldom lived in it, preferring the one he had erected for himself. The second was the Great Warrior's or War Leader's. The third belonged to the Beloved Old Men, the Councillors; the fourth to the youths and their associates. Near by was the huge octagonal assembly hall where councils were held and where dances and social receptions on a large scale took place.

In the golden light of this early August morning, the scene had more the look of fairyland than of earth. The red walls were like broken reefs of coral, beneath a glistening, metallic, green sea of waving and muttering oak and hickory leaves. Between its clay banks the water of the creek, smitten by the sunlight, ran, a transparent, molten flame of silver, in a burnished copper trench. Over all hung a sky of pure sapphire. The air quivered with the muffled savagery of drums and the shrill, weird, mournful melody of reed pipes.

The square was filled with women and children, all dressed in their best. Some of the children were engaged in *Thla-challilch-cah,* a game somewhat like marbles, played with bullets. A few of the older boys were playing ball. The objective of the Creek ball game was to hit a small screen of fibres made for the purpose and placed among the top branches of a tall tree. The women had brought

all the savory dishes prepared for that day's feast: jars of honey—bees were very plentiful in the Creek country—whortle-berries; the large berries of the dwarf palmetto, which grew in shiny black clusters and burst open when ripe, and were considered a delicacy by Creeks, deer, bear and turkeys alike, and by the bees also, who extracted honey from them; the Creek staple, *coontetucalisa,* which was the bread made from a briar root growing along the streams, the roots being pounded in a mortar, then hung in a cloth with water washing through them till all the sediment could be collected and baked into cakes; fox grapes, persimmons, blackberries, hickory and other nuts; and roasted deer, turkeys, and fish such as sturgeon, brook trout, red horse, buffalo fish and perch.

"To a man who has only been permitted to dream of food for long moons, even the odors have something almost satisfying about them," Barking Water said to Lachlan.

"Especially when that man is a pot which has no bottom, and therefore can never be filled," Lachlan answered, grinning at him mischievously.

"You have said it," Wewoca admitted. "Of knowledge this pot can never be emptied; with food it can never be filled so full that an intelligent squirrel, at least, cannot find room to hide still another nut. I would not have it otherwise."

A number of men arrived now, dragging four immense logs, the highest and thickest hickories they had been able to find. They laid these on the ground

in the shape of a cross with their ends corresponding to the four points of the compass. The special women dancers now began to dance the Turkey Dance, while others sprinkled the square with sand, or powdered clay; and the *totekitchah,* the sacred fire, was lighted at the center of the four logs.

"I don't think much of the Turkey Dance," said Barking Water; "nor of the Tadpole Dance either, which will be done by four men and four women. To-night the men will do the Dance of the Second Commanders; and to-morrow the women will do the Gun Dance. No doubt these are very good dances. But, for me, there is no dance but *Obungah Hahjo,* the Mad Dance. Watch me do that; for, I promise you, you will see something splendid!"

At that moment some thirty warriors filed out of the assembly hall. In the pouring, yellow sunlight, their painted, brown bodies and faces glistened so that the men seemed to be polished bronze images enamelled with thin flakes of carmine, gold and cobalt and crowned with hovering flocks of orioles and tanagers. The warriors formed two lines and stood motionless, but for the fluttering feathered rainbow of color shooting upward from their brows. Through this lane of gleaming bronze and enamel the White Leader emerged, magnificent.

Lachlan, who had seen McGillivray only in frontiersman's garb, caught his breath as his eyes took in the superb proportions of White Alex's painted body and of his splendid head, from which ostrich feathers of many dyes, and paradise and peacock

plumes set in a jeweled band, rose in a crown and fell in cascades to the ground behind him. From his shoulders hung a short mantle of black velvet lined with the breasts of tropical birds. Green parrot wings decked his ankles. His bracelets were made from the ruby throats of Guatemalan humming-birds. His Spanish friends in Florida and Louisiana had augmented the wardrobe of their Indian ally with the paraphernalia and insignia of bygone Aztec and Peruvian emperors. Across his chest, falling in half a dozen circles to his waist, he wore a necklace of gold patines alternated with rudely cut diamonds, mined from his own hills, and with turquoises, emeralds, garnets and pearls. His beaded girdle, which was fringed with white paradise, was clasped with a priceless bit of old Toledo damascene. Two large brilliantly cut topazes swung from the gold hoops in his ears and another, rimmed in gold and small emeralds, drooped from his headband upon his forehead. His extraordinary eyes seemed to catch new fire from their jeweled and painted setting. They flashed into tawny flame, like a puma's at night, from under the darkness of his heavy overhanging brows. He carried a carved ivory staff mounted with feathers. He raised this now and with it beckoned Lachlan to him. He stood for some moments in silence, his gaze traveling slowly over the boy's ruddy hair to linger mournfully and searchingly in his gray eyes.

"Lachlan McGillivray, Laklan Chate," he said,

gently, at last. Lachlan, not knowing what to say, made no answer. That melancholy tone always moved him profoundly.

Three white men now came out of the assembly house and stood in the background, conversing. One was dressed in fringed buckskin. The other two were in uniforms that were somewhat spattered by travel.

"Marchand, I congratulate you on your cousin. He wears his feathers like a true fighting cock," one of the soldiers, a Spaniard named Valdez, said mockingly to the other.

"*Mon Dieu!* Don't call that savage my cousin when there is no necessity. He does not hear. Is it my fault that my uncle married a Creek? Let me only persuade him fully into our plans, by making him believe that we will crown him emperor of all this country from Louisiana to Virginia; and then, when he has served France's purpose and Spain's, you will see how quickly I'll forget the kinship that so dishonors my blood!"

Nolan, the man in buckskin, laughed.

"I've served General Wilkinson a long time," he said. "I was with him in that cabal against General Washington. But this is the biggest and riskiest game I've ever seen him try to play. If we fail, and are discovered, we expect sanctuary with you Spanish. For if the Americans knew that one of their army commanders was selling out their western territory to the two Bourbon kings—well—they'd slice off our scalps as readily as that half-white

Creek chief, there, would if *he* guessed we were merely using him as a cat's paw."

"Keep on flattering McGillivray's vanity and he will never suspect us. He is a veritable peacock for vanity," said Valdez.

"He has vanity," Marchand admitted. "And brains."

"Then, my dear Captain, le Marquis de Marchand," said the Spaniard, cynically, "I implore you, continue to kiss him on the cheek and call him 'dear cousin.' Because he is all-powerful with these savages; not only his Creeks, but the Choctaw and Cherokee also. And, with the aid of his tribesmen and all their red allies, he can easily drive every American out of the territory west of the mountains. The settlements in Tennessee and Kentucky cannot stand against his bloodthirsty army of tomahawks. It is our work to see that he does this business. So, Marquis, again I say, kiss his cheek and call him 'cousin!' " He pulled his black moustache and looked, with cold malicious mirth, at Marchand, whose brow was flushed with anger.

"His Majesty beckons," Nolan said, grinning. The three, assuming sober expressions of dignity, walked slowly across the square and were presented by Chief Alex to his new son.

"Here is a new card in the deck," said Nolan, later, as McGillivray moved away with Lachlan to present him again, as a warrior now, to Tustunnuc, the War Leader.

"Yes; a white boy. I trust this new card, as you

call him, will not be used to trump our game." Marchand was frowning.

"Oh, what can a stupid, American boy do to hinder us? The very notion is absurd," said Valdez. "This is merely the apprehension which makes itself felt in every white man's bones in Indian country. Especially in McGillivray's presence. For we all admit his personality has in it something haunting and terrible. He has not taken this boy because of any love for the Americans: but for some savage whim without reason."

"Valdez, you little know my dear cousin," Marchand replied, still frowning, "if you think that he does anything in life without a reason. Kindly remember that most of this man's blood is not Creek, nor Latin, but Scotch. The Scotch are a race of men who are ruled by their heads."

"We will make friends with the boy and learn whatever we need to know. We may even use him, for certain rewards, as a spy upon McGillivray; for I don't wholly trust our Red King," said Nolan. "If we find that the boy endangers us or our plans in any way—" He paused significantly.

"Oh, certainly," Valdez agreed, with a shrug. "A knife in the throat accomplishes the same purpose with a boy as with a deer!" He turned, with a solemn demeanor, to accept a puff from the pipe which Tustunnuc offered him.

The discussions between the three white men and McGillivray were many and long; so that Lachlan saw comparatively little of his foster father during

the week. He found plenty to amuse him, however. Under Barking Water's direction he learned all the games and the dances; and he ate, each day, as much as he could hold. Wherever he turned, it seemed to him, he was likely to find one of the three strangers at his elbow. His native Scotch reticence, not unmotivated by a general suspicion of any too friendly folk, caused him to question silently why these men were so genial with him and so evidently bent on winning his confidence. He did not object to Marchand and Valdez because he did not expect anything better of Latin men from Louisiana. But, in his heart, he hated and despised Nolan, whom he looked on as a renegade American because he spoke English and had lived for some years in America. He let nothing of his feeling appear, however. By the end of the week he had pretty well convinced them that he was really an ignorant and stupid lump of a youth.

On the last day of the *Boosketah* Lachlan took part in the flower-offering. With all the Creeks, men and women, he gathered wild flowers and, circling about the fire, which was now consuming the logs to ashes, cast the fresh blossoms into the flames. It seemed that this ceremony had something to do with wiping out past sins. In the evening, the wild music of the drums, pipes, and rattles, the padding of feet, and the fierce shouts of many voices, drew him to the assembly hall. He stood in the doorway to watch the scene within, where utter madness reigned. The *Obungah Hahjo* was well named!

Feathered warriors with burning wolfish eyes, and minds crazed by the Black Drink, leaped, hurtled, thrashed the air with their arms, scratched and gashed themselves and their neighbors, whirled and screamed till the foam from their lips spattered their naked bodies. He soon spied Barking Water. The dusky "Wild Man" was apparently made of India rubber to-night. He shot towards the ceiling, on to and over the backs of other dancers only a little less mad than he, barking, not like the rapids in a river, but like a school of alligators coming up out of swamp mud. Racial memories of Africa were in the savage swift flexions of his muscles, in the rolling fiery eyes, in the thick pouting lips where the foam of frenzy clung like rime; racial memories of jungle hunts, following or fleeing from the lion and the rhinoceros, of cannibal feasts by the Congo, and of black drums beating their message of terror along the coast of Guinea where, under a hot, vaporous sky that drooped like a coffin pall, a slave-ship lay at anchor.

Every one was dancing. The White Leader's face appeared every now and then in the mêlée. Valdez, Marchand, and Nolan accepted the Black Drink from White Alex's hand and danced the Mad Dance among his Creeks. Lachlan felt a touch on his arm. He heard a whisper. He turned from the blazing whirling room to the dark still shadows of the outdoors; and saw the scarred morose face of Blue Arrow.

"P'sst!" Blue Arrow hissed, tapping his lips to

indicate silence. He ducked away into the darkness under the walls of the deserted square. Lachlan followed him.

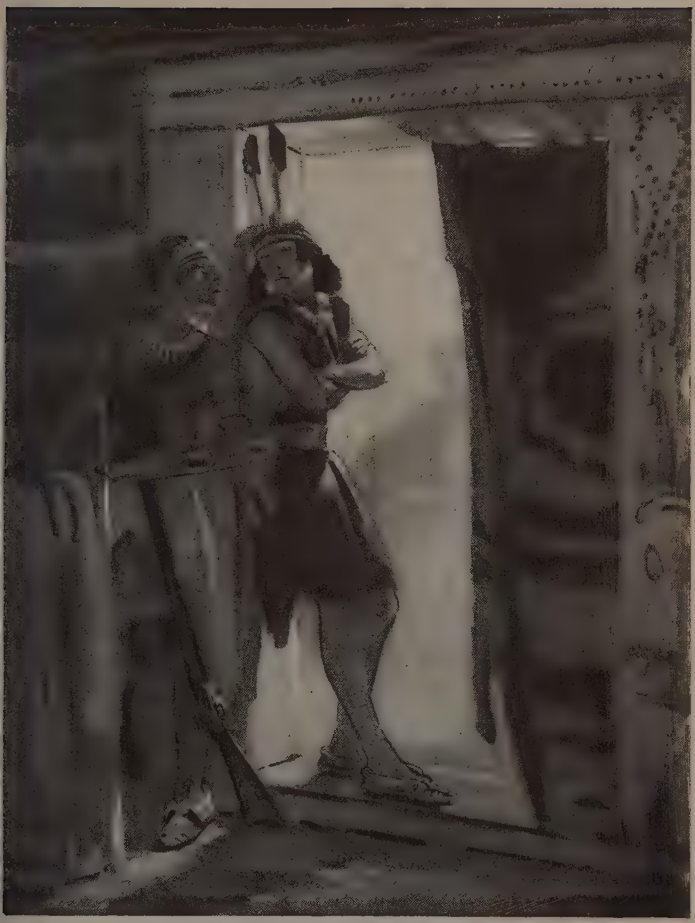
"You save Blue Arrow," the Indian said. "Blue Arrow save Ross. Take Ross Watauga. Blue Arrow come tell Laklan. Now Blue Arrow go quick or Creeks kill him."

Lachlan, shaking all over with excitement, gripped the Indian's arm.

"Are you telling the truth? Ross is alive?" he demanded, breathlessly.

"You speak good Creek now!" Blue Arrow said, surprised. "It is true. When you ran down the hill to get help from that hunter I did not know he was McGillivray; because I thought White Alex was in Alabama. I knew it only when I saw the Creeks coming across the brook. But I could not help you. For I had killed Willogee, a Creek of this town. They would have killed me if I had come down. So when I had seen you ride away with White Alex, I put Ross on the horse and went to Watauga. Now Ross is with John Sevier. Ross gave him the letter from Jim. I came back to tell you, so that you would not grieve for Ross any more. I told Ross I would come to see if you were alive, after I had taken Sevier's letter to Jim. Now I go back to Nashville to tell Jim you are safe. I must go quickly or the Creeks will kill me."

Keenly touched by this proof of Blue Arrow's gratitude and loyalty, Lachlan quickly told him that Willogee lived and therefore he was free to return.



HE TURNED FROM THE BLAZING, WHIRLING ROOM TO THE DARK, STILL SHADOWS OF THE OUTDOORS, AND SAW BLUE ARROW

"Then I will come back," said the Indian. "But do not tell any one I have been here. That would be dangerous for you also. In about ten days, look for me again."

Without more words, Blue Arrow sped away through the night. Lachlan's heart was throbbing with happiness as he returned to the assembly hall. He hoped that Barking Water had danced enough and would come out and talk to him. But Wewoca was still deep in memories of the jungle. The noise was increasing. More drums were beating, more rattles shaking. The shouts were louder and madder. The fierce fantastic orgy would go on till dawn.

Presently the White Leader thrust his way through the hurtling mass of painted bodies by jabbing to right and left with his staff and his knife. He stood beside Lachlan, looking down at him with eyes that were like hot coals.

"Laklan Chate, my son," he said huskily, "you will be Emperor of America after me. To-night I, the Red King, have made a pact with three white kings—the King of France, the King of Spain, and General James Wilkinson, who is, in a sense, a king, since he is a general of the United States Army. Not one American shall be left living in the land. In two weeks we go to New Orleans, where we will meet Governor Miró and General Wilkinson to settle everything. And, after that, war!—war! The Abihka will pile scalps till the

war-pole is covered. Your throne shall touch the sun from the top of a mountain of bleeding hair!"

He turned abruptly and plunged into the vortex again.

Lachlan leaned against the doorpost with a sickening sense of terror beating, like the echo of those savage drums, upon his heart. Wilkinson. General James Wilkinson. Every one on the frontier knew that name. Wilkinson, of Kentucky. Wilkinson, of the Continental Army. What could this man have to do with Creek massacres of his frontier friends and with Spanish plots against his own country? If the White Leader's words were not merely the poisoned froth of madness and the Black Drink, then they meant that a man in a high post of trust in the American service, a man who, perhaps, had the Army in his hand, was a traitor!

"Oh, if I could only tell Jim!" Lachlan thought, frantically. "He'd know what to do."

There must be some way by which he could prevent it. There *must* be! He would coax McGillivray to take Blue Arrow with them to New Orleans. Whatever information he picked up there Blue Arrow could carry to Jim. An American selling his country's blood for Spanish gold—! Thinking, thinking, till his head seemed ready to burst, Lachlan stood there, drooping against the doorpost, till night passed and the dawn came up; and the drums and fifes fell into silence and men, spent from savage frenzy, staggered by him out into

the gray light and fell, as if drugged, in sleep on the ground.

A hand drifted down upon his shoulder. He shivered with repulsion at the touch of it.

"Laklan Chate——"

The sense of repulsion passed suddenly and completely. Lachlan felt again the sharp thrill, blended so curiously of fear and pity, which always stirred his heart when he heard the White Leader's voice speaking to him with that note of savage and mournful tenderness.

CHAPTER V

OOMY AND GYPSY JOHN: PARTICULARLY OOMY

FORTUNATELY for Lachlan's chaotic plans—hardly plans, indeed, but rather hopes—organization of the summer hunt for deerskins and bartering with some traders from Pensacola prevented McGillivray from making the New Orleans trip for several weeks. Five days before the date set for departure Blue Arrow returned. So Lachlan had plenty of time in which to become friends with him, just as if he had never seen him before. The White Leader was so pleased to see his adopted son choosing his friends among the Creeks that he willingly agreed when Lachlan asked permission to take both Blue Arrow and Barking Water with him to New Orleans.

"Blue Arrow is a dangerous man, but he will be a good friend for you," said White Alex. "There is not a better scout nor a faster runner among the Creeks. He can teach you much. And I am not afraid that he will lose his temper with my son. As to Barking Water, I don't know what good he is, except to set one off in roars of laughter. Still, I am glad you like him. Because I want you to laugh

like a boy. You are too serious, Laklan Chate—like a man with troubles on his mind. You, who will one day be an emperor, should be the merriest boy in the world."

Lachlan took a hint from that remark, wisely. He saw that the only way to make sure that McGillivray would never [illegible] him was to appear light-hearted and utterly contented with his new life. Like most boys of his sturdy, Highland Scotch blood, he was naturally jolly; but the fun in him had been subdued by the last few years in Nashville, where laughter had almost ceased to be heard.

"Lachlan Douglas," he told himself, "ye'll have to play the fool an' laugh yer head off, if ye're goin' to save Nashville." He grinned suddenly. "It'll be no hard job, I'm thinkin', wi' Barking Water to help ye. Yon darkey butterball would make a tombstone crack itself open wi' laughin'."

The reason why he called Wewoca a butterball was that, since the fasting days, Barking Water had been making up for lost time and past hunger. In fact he had eaten so much that he looked, in his deerskin suit, like a huge football with a head, arms and legs, as he bulged, trundled and waddled in his sprightly fashion about the village from one hospitable kitchen to another.

"Where do you put it all?" Lachlan asked him one day, with real interest.

"I often wonder, myself," Wewoca replied seriously. "But undoubtedly I have the gift of eating; which is a great talent. Like a snake, my skin

stretches, but never bursts. Even in this, Laklan Chate, I am an extraordinary man."

In due time Lachlan found himself floating down the Mississippi in a fur pirogue with his two chosen friends, the three white men, McGillivray and the boat's crew. The pirogue was a huge one and carried a single mast, so that sail could speed her when the wind was favorable. The passengers sat on fur bales in the bottom of the boat, back of the mast, out of the way of the paddles. Forward, there were some bundles of luggage and a small compartment made of deerskin, something like a dog kennel, shaped by the planking that covered the prow. Lachlan supposed that McGillivray's more valuable effects were disposed of in that water-tight skin compartment. He took an immediate interest in the captain or leader of the crew, who stood aloft on the boarded prow, with a long pole, used chiefly, it seemed, to push aside floating logs that might snag the boat. He was a man of medium size with very muscular arms and a long face that was brown and glistening and held deep-set, fiery black eyes. His hair, which hung to his waist, was black and, like his skin, it shone as if oiled. He wore two large, golden hoops in his ears; and an orange-colored kerchief was drawn tight over his brow and head and knotted behind. His brawny arms were tattooed with snake designs done in blue and red. There were also scars on his arms, and on his broad brown chest. An instrument somewhat resembling a mandolin hung from his waist. And sometimes

when the river was clear, or at night in camp, he would play on it and sing strange songs; wild fierce songs to which he beat time with one foot.

"What's yer name?" Lachlan asked him; then he added quickly to himself, "That's foolish, seein' this man's Spanish, likely, an' doesn't understand me!"

"But, *si,* I understand," the boatman smiled. "My name Juan Gitano."

Nolan, who was squatting near, overheard and explained. "That's not a name, exactly," he said "Juan is the same as John and *gitano* is Spanish for gypsy. So he's telling you that he is called Gypsy John."

"I've heard o' gypsies," said Lachlan.

"You'll hear a lot of this one in New Orleans," Nolan went on. "He isn't a real gypsy. He's a Venezuelan."

"What's that?" Lachlan wanted to know.

"Oh, Venezuela is a country in South America. Valdez will tell you it's a country of devils; because it's there Don Francisco de Miranda was born who is roaming the world now, trying to raise an army to start a revolution and tear all South America out of the hands of Spain. He wants to treat the Spanish king the way your George Washington treated King George. This fellow here, Gypsy John, was Miranda's servant. The Spanish had spies and kidnappers on Miranda's trail, but all they caught was Gypsy John—all dressed up in Miranda's best clothes and riding in his carriage just to fool them,

while Miranda was safely hidden somewhere else. They tortured this fellow, and they gave him a year in the galleys, ironed him and lashed him, to see what he'd tell them. Stupid fools! As if Miranda would tell his plans to his stable boy or his valet; and this fellow could have been no more than that. No brains at all. So, a while back, a Spanish ship brings him to Louisiana with orders to let him loose. And he's earning his keep on the river."

"Ye wouldn't think he'd seen hard days. He's always smilin' or singin'," Lachlan remarked.

"Oh, hard knocks won't take the spirit out of one of those savages from Venezuela. Wait till you meet Oomy!" Nolan burst out laughing.

"Who's Oomy?"

"Well, I left out a bit of the story. Gypsy John told the Spanish at last, that he'd give them all the information he had, if they'd take him back to Venezuela to get his little darling Oomy."

"Is Oomy his son?" Lachlan asked. At that Nolan roared again.

"Far be it from me to deny it!" Nolan rolled about with mirth. Lachlan was obliged to laugh, too, though he had no idea what the joke was. "The fellow had no information at all, of course. But he did have Oomy!"

"Who is Oomy?" Lachlan demanded, now quite out of patience.

"Ask Gypsy John," Nolan answered, chuckling.

This conversation took place on the bank during breakfast the second morning of the trip. While

Lachlan was trying to get something definite about the mysterious Oomy from Nolan, whose only reply was another irritating fit of laughter, Gypsy John went by, towards the boat, with a bunch of herbs in his hand and a small skin bottle from which faint buzzing sounds emerged. Lachlan sprang up and ran after him.

"Oh, Gypsy John!" he called.

Of course Wewoca, who was always hard on Lachlan's heels, jumped up too, and ran after the boatman, calling, "Oh, Gylipee Jaw!" which was as close to "Gypsy John" as his Seminole tongue could come.

Blue Arrow slipped along silently after them, looking as sullen and morose as ever, though he was feeling particularly happy because he was off on this trip with Lachlan and because he loved the river. It was not poor Blue Arrow's fault that he had the kind of face which simply would not cheer up no matter how blithe he felt. Then, too, the avenging kinsmen of Willogee had in no wise improved it with the scar they had carved on it.

"Gypsy John," said Lachlan, catching up with him at the boat's side, "Who is Oomy?"

The Venezuelan's fierce dark eyes kindled with affection. He smiled broadly; it was a childlike, shy, happy smile.

"Ah! my Oomy!" he breathed tenderly. "You know about my Oomy?"

"Not yet," Lachlan said, with humorous impa-

tience. "But I've got to know quick—or bust! Is he yer son?"

"But *si, si!* He is my son. He is my friend. *Mi querido amigo!* He is flower of my life. He is one emerald in—how you call?—one rock-pile. He come to me like the pearl come out the oyster. I love him. Oh, veree much."

"Where is the laddie now? In New Orleans?"

Gypsy John looked shocked. "But no! Never I leave my precious Oomy. Always he go with me. The beautiful one! Come, now. I show him to you." He leaped aboard and ran to the skin compartment under the prow. The two boys and Blue Arrow followed.

"You haven't had a poor wee laddie shut up in there all this time!" Lachlan exclaimed. "Smotherin' an' starvin'—the poor bairn!"

"First I feed him," Gypsy John said. "See!" He shook the buzzing bottle close to Lachlan's ear.

"Flies!" the boy gasped.

"Oh, *si.* Fly—clicket—skeeto—insecto. He love them." He turned back a flap at the top of the compartment, whipped off the cover of the bottle, and tossed the bottle inside, closing the flap tight. "Listen!"

There was one heavy flapping sound; then a succession of snaps.

"One, two, three." Gypsy John counted the snaps up to nineteen, when silence fell behind the deerskin. He looked worried. "But I give him twenty," he muttered. "Ah! the villain! The

ugly one!" he cried, as a large blue-bottle emerged through a knothole in the planking and flew frantically aloft to compose its harassed feelings on the mast. That blue-bottle was to cause trouble later on. Juan Gitano shook his fist at it.

"That's no wee laddie in there," said Lachlan, with conviction.

"Even if I had not seen a Spanish father feed his son with flies," Barking Water remarked, "I would have known it was their custom. How else can one account for such a thin, greedy people?"

Gypsy John began to hum a sort of tune in hissing whispers, padding one foot to the rhythm. He opened the flap all the way down. "Now he comes out. The beautiful one! The baby! The little pearl! Whish-a-hish-sh-sh——"

First a dull-hued waving snout pushed out from under the cover. The boys gasped with amazement and jumped back. Then slowly, heavily, but apparently keeping time to the slow crooning "whish" of Gypsy John's song, Oomy, the beautiful one, emerged into the full light of day. Oomy, the little pearl, was a large land turtle!

"Wha—what—" Lachlan stuttered breathlessly, and couldn't say another word. In stupefied silence the three youths watched while Gypsy John fed the bunch of wet herbs to his pet. Even Wewoca, who was seldom at a loss for words, did not immediately think of a remark to make about Oomy. Blue Arrow made the only sound—two long, slow, deep grunts.

Indeed there was something about Oomy which discouraged light chatter. Oomy had dignity; not so much dignity as a Rabbi, perhaps, yet rather more dignity than a Bishop—or it might have been the other way about. Oomy was majestic, like a sheik, and there was something in the slow, ponderous, and inexorable way he went about his business that resembled a snow-plow or the Supreme Court. His likeness to a sheik was chiefly due to three sequins which looked like gold but most probably were brass and which dangled from punctures made for them in the right-side edge of his shell. On one wrist he wore a narrow, hammered gold bracelet. His general coloration was like that of dusty verdure. His eyes, like little rubies, were bright with fire and interest as he listened to the frenzied buzz of the blue-bottle which was gyrating madly about the mast. Oomy was not a very large turtle, not one of those Galapagos with a six-foot shell. His shell probably measured two and a half feet from end to end, perhaps three. But to Lachlan, seeing him when he had expected to see a nice little Spanish boy of about four years of age, Oomy looked enormous. Also, he hadn't at all the shape of a nice little boy, nor the color, nor even the facial expression. Lachlan stared at the creature, speechless. Barking Water stared, with his round eyes rolling and his mouth slowly falling open. Blue Arrow stared and emitted another deep, solemn grunt.

Oomy seemed to be doing his best to climb on his

master's knee. He felt over Gypsy John's feet with his clumsy front claws and stretched his neck as far as it would go. The man leaned down and Oomy rubbed his hard beak along Gypsy's cheek.

"How old is he?" Lachlan asked.

Gypsy John shrugged. "I do not know. But I think he small boy yet. He little more small, I think, but not much, when first I find him, fifteen year back, in my country, my Venezuela. I like have some family, but got no wife, no child, so I take Oomy; he live with me always like my family. Then come my master, Don Francisco de Miranda, and he say, 'Juan Gitano, we go make travel.' But he say no can take Oomy, because Oomy get seasick and maybe die. He also like Oomy veree much, because Oomy veree good friend to him. So I leave Oomy by one swamp where first I find him. Veree good swamp with many fly, skeeto, insecto. We go make travel, England, France, most England, where I learn speak so veree good English. But my master think all time only how get our country free. That make much trouble for him. So he make plot and I say, 'Yes, I do it. No matter if I die. For you and Venezuela I do everything.' That how Spanish catch me and never catch him."

"I want to hear how ye got Oomy again."

Gypsy John's eyes flashed; he grinned broadly. "Spanish throw me in galleys, jails also, veree bad places. See." He drew his shirt down from his shoulder and showed a big scar made by a branding iron. "All these things they do for make me tell

about Don Francisco. Then I say, 'Oomy know all these things. I take you where Oomy.' Because I think they kill me sure, so better I see Oomy and tell him he got to look out for himself now; because I know all time Oomy alone in swamp he expect me come back and live with him once more. Governor Miró say to Captain Valdez to go with me in ship for get Oomy. For that he promise to Valdez veree fine, gold metal. But he say, too, Valdez must bring me and Oomy safe and in veree good health to Louisiana or he put Valdez in jail."

"I wonder he didn't cook the two o' ye in one soup-kettle when he saw how ye'd fooled him!" Lachlan said, laughing. Gypsy grinned again.

"No. Because when Valdez bring me and Oomy to Miró, he is veree mad. He say to Miró that everybody laugh at him for drive along New Orleans street with one big turtle. Miró come out to see Oomy in cart and Valdez veree mad and a big crowd laughing. And then Miró start to laugh so hard he not can stop for half hour. So Miró say he give freedom of Louisiana to Oomy, because Oomy make for him best joke ever he heard in life! See." He pulled a folded and soiled parchment out of his wallet and spread it before Lachlan. "You not can read Spanish, eh? I read for you. This is Miró seal, and this Miro' name. It say, In name of the King, Oomy, loyal subject of Spanish crown, got freedom of state in Louisiana; and recommend to courtesy of all military and civil authorities. Also it say how Juan Gitano is private

secretary to Oomy and therefore under special protection of Governor Miró. I keep paper veree careful; because Valdez he not like Oomy. He say Oomy make him look like one big fool. Then, also, Miró give Oomy that medal he make for Valdez. See."

He ran his finger over the bracelet which Oomy wore. "He give Oomy that Valdez medal. So I take hammer and make that Valdez medal one bracelet for Oomy. Oomy like veree much that bracelet. Oh, *si*, veree much. But Valdez not like. No turtle got bracelet like Oomy." Then he added, proudly, "Oomy only turtle of the world got private secretary and freedom of Louisiana!"

Barking Water nudged Lachlan now and said petulantly:

"Why don't you talk Creek so that Blue Arrow and I can understand? Above all, when it is something that makes you laugh!"

Lachlan hastily repeated to them as much of the story as he had Creek words for; whereupon Blue Arrow grunted profoundly, and Wewoca roared lustily with laughter.

"What I understand best," said Wewoca, "is how mad Valdez was because every one laughed at him, and also because the great Spanish chief gave his gold piece to the turtle. And I am delighted because Valdez, who is a Spaniard, was put to shame, and forced to give his gold to the turtle. My father would enjoy that. Some day I will cause all Spaniards to be laughed at by all the world."

"Still, Wewoca," Lachlan said teasingly, "the Spanish father does not feed his son on flies."

"Laklan Chate," Barking Water replied with dignity, "I ask you sincerely, have you ever seen a Spanish father feed his son?"

"No," Lachlan admitted.

"Ah! So I thought! Then why do you say so positively that the Spanish father does not feed flies to his son? For you know nothing about it. Follow *my* example, Laklan Chate. For I speak never of things I do not know—if, indeed, there are things in the world not yet known to me. It is not customary to find a turtle on a fur boat. Therefore it was only natural that this turtle called Oomy should surprise me."

"This turtle called Oomy has surprised wiser men than you!" Lachlan answered, with an irrepressible shout of laughter. He was picturing the scene of Oomy's arrival after the long sea-voyage, with the crowds in the street, the soldiers, the Governor, all rocking and howling with mirth—and Valdez' black and sulky look. "Poor Valdez. Ay, the poor fool!"

The men came aboard now and presently the pirogue was floating on the current, with Gypsy John at his old place on the prow. The driftwood kept him busy this morning so that he had little time for backward glances into the boat where his pet was sunning himself before the mast. Unfortunately, Valdez had spread his blanket just behind the mast, where he lay stretched out and continued

to gnaw a bit of the broiled fish which they had had for breakfast. And aloft, the blue-bottle buzzed; and below, Oomy's bright little ruby eyes sparkled. Presently Oomy tucked his head under his shell and presumably went to sleep beneath his natural hat brim. The blue-bottle ceased to buzz and began to drop lower in its gyrations. Valdez ceased to eat, because McGillivray had asked him a question which necessitated a long explanation; he flung his hand, with the fragrant fish smears on it, behind his head on the blanket within an inch of the place where Oomy's head had disappeared. The blue-bottle dropped down very silently and alighted on those fingers with their attractive odor. Swifter than a flash Oomy's head darted out from under its shell sombrero and his hard jaws closed upon that fly—and incidentally on Valdez' digits.

With a terrible yelp Valdez sprang up, as well as he could with Oomy's heavy bulk hanging to his hand. The whole boat was in an uproar. Nobody could loosen Oomy's bony jaws until the blue-bottle slid helplessly down his throat. Then, having no interest whatever in Valdez, except as a fly-catcher, Oomy let go of his fingers and retired under his own hat. Nolan led the laughter that followed unfeelingly on the Spaniard's predicament.

"Another Oomy and Valdez story for the Governor and the citizens of New Orleans," he said. "That turtle will make you famous yet!"

In a rage Valdez attacked the turtle, dragging it and kicking it till it was overturned, helpless, on

its back. He ripped his knife from its sheath and stooped to plunge it into the creature's belly. But Lachlan was a shade quicker in the leap that knocked Valdez to one side. And Blue Arrow, with a swift, noiseless movement, relieved Valdez of his knife; while Barking Water, not without much difficulty, turned Oomy right side up again. His fury increased by this interference, Valdez' malevolence was next aimed at Gypsy John. He ordered him to come down and kill the turtle with his own knife. To enforce the order he drew his pistol. Gypsy John refused. Instead he folded his arms and told Valdez to shoot if he wanted to. By this time Lachlan's Highland blood was at the boiling point. He hurled himself at Valdez and knocked him down.

"Ye coward!" he shouted hoarsely. "The poor beastie didna mean to hurt ye. Why dinna ye wash yer hands, like a Christian? If ye hurt Oomy I'll fix ye, I promise ye! I'm no scared o' yer pistol, neither. Ye let Oomy be!"

Then Barking Water did a clever thing. He turned, with a smile and a gesture, to McGillivray and said:

"Perhaps this Spaniard has not yet learned that Laklan Chate is the White Leader's son? He answers him as if he were a packboy."

McGillivray's eyes flashed fire. His voice cut across the noise of the scuffle in cold bladelike tones:

"Captain Valdez will oblige me by forgetting the incident. What my son desires is also the desire of

HE HURLED HIMSELF AT VALDEZ, AND KNOCKED HIM DOWN

the Creek nation and of our allies. I speak as the voice of twenty thousand warriors."

"Don't be a fool!" Marchand snapped in Valdez' ear. "McGillivray is worth more to us than a dead turtle, or a dead boatman."

"Decidedly," Nolan put in. "And Miró would strip your uniform from you for this, if he knew of it. Besides, even if he did give Oomy the freedom of Louisiana as a joke, he wouldn't joke with *you,* my friend, if you flouted the seal on that parchment John carries."

There was nothing for Valdez to do but swallow his rage and leave Oomy once more victor on the field. Barking Water drew Lachlan aside.

"Listen, Laklan Chate, while I say more wise things. I like your courage in attacking that ugly, greedy Spaniard. But, now that you are a chief's son, keep your courage for the warpath. With such poor creatures as that Spaniard put on a grand air, as if it never entered your head that one of them would oppose you. Be very proud and scornful. That is the proper manner for a chief's son. McGillivray has it so perfectly that men are more afraid of his eyes and his voice than of his knife. When I am a Seminole chief I assure you that my scorn will be terrible. I am almost afraid, myself, when I think of it."

Blue Arrow had a different thought.

"Valdez will try to kill you one day for that," he said. "But I will always be watching."

Gypsy John, with tears running down his face, embraced Lachlan.

"I am your friend, Oomy is your friend. We are your friend," he kept repeating. Of all those involved in the incident, Oomy was the only cool one. Oomy had pulled his head in under his hat and gone to sleep.

During the rest of the trip Gypsy John showed his friendship for Lachlan in every possible way. Presently he and Lachlan, Wewoca and Blue Arrow —and Oomy, of course—were as thick as thieves. Gypsy John told the boys strange fascinating tales about his own country and its savage places and tribes. And, most fascinating of all, he showed them how to shoot darts from a blowgun the way the Venezuelan Indians do. He made the blowguns and the darts for them. While Lachlan and Wewoca enjoyed playing with the new weapon, Blue Arrow took it very seriously. He practised continually until he became so expert that Gypsy John declared he had never seen better shooting in his own country.

"You are foolish," Barking Water said, "for the white man's gun is the best of all weapons. It is the only thing the white men have that is better than Indian things."

Blue Arrow did not answer for a moment but looked at Valdez, who was lying on the bank, carrying on a low-voiced conversation with Nolan. Then he spoke, casually:

"There will come a time, perhaps, when it will

be well for Laklan Chate that Blue Arrow can shoot with a gun that makes no noise."

There was not a trace of expression on Blue Arrow's face when he said that. But Barking Water's eyes rolled till hardly anything but the whites showed.

They reached New Orleans the next day. Governor Miró had sent his carriage and a guard in uniform to meet McGillivray. But the White Leader and Lachlan were not the only travellers who were conducted with special dignities through the streets of New Orleans that day. No, indeed!

"See Susanna?" Gypsy John asked, pointing up the bank. "Susanna come for Oomy. Susanna like Oomy veree much."

"Susanna?" Lachlan peered about. Presently he saw her. Susanna was a huge, dingy, work mule with enormous ears. She came down to the boat now, as she heard Gypsy John's whistle, the single bell she wore tinkling pleasantly. On her back, supported by a sort of pack-saddle, was a large shallow willow basket lined with crimson velvet. The Indian boy, who had brought the mule, helped Gypsy John hoist Oomy into the basket. Then Gypsy, himself, took the halter and started off at a slow trot. So, amid shouts of welcome, did Oomy, the magnificent, free citizen of Louisiana, ride in state—like McGillivray and Lachlan—towards the mansion of His Excellency, Governor Miró.

CHAPTER VI

NUMBER THIRTEEN

THERE had been a banquet fit for kings. Now the guests were drifting in groups through Governor Miró's garden. Stars shone in the dreamy southern sky, torches on pillars flared here and there, and fireflies flickered about the fountain. Occasionally a shadowy bulk on the fountain rim moved and a tiny light went out, as a venturesome firefly displayed his torch carelessly too near Oomy's snout. Sounds of smitten strings and a song came from an adobe arbor covered with vines where Gypsy John was entertaining the Governor and a few notable guests. Lachlan, with the inevitable Barking Water at his side, lounged on the edge of the Governor's group, his eyes fixed on one man.

"So ye're Number Thirteen, are ye? They gave ye the right number. For Judas was the thirteenth at table," he muttered to himself, and continued to stare balefully at General Wilkinson.

James Wilkinson, a Marylander by birth, was a handsome man of medium height and proud bearing. He was clever and witty in conversation. He had a manner that made men like him. His physical courage was never in question on the field; but, in

private life, when a man offended him or stood in his way, he did not make open quarrel with his foe. He preferred the hired assassin's shot from behind cover in such cases; or the serpent tongue of slander, to ruin the good name and standing of the one whose honesty threatened his own schemes. He was ambitious far beyond his powers and abilities. And that towering ambition was so dangerous a thing that it influenced men in lofty positions to compromise with Wilkinson and give him posts to which he should never have been appointed. They said there was no telling what Wilkinson might do in the west, if he were offended. He had a following in Kentucky. Perhaps he had the power to turn over all the western country—smitten as it was by the Indian terror—to the Spaniards. He had been given his high position in the Army, in reality, because the President and some of his advisors feared what Wilkinson would do if his own country did not feed his ambitions. And Wilkinson had accepted the honors and the responsibilities and then sold himself to Spain. He was a poor man and he wanted to be rich. So Governor Miró, acting for Spain, paid him handsomely for his treachery to America, and, in the files of the Spanish secret service, Wilkinson was thenceforth listed as "Number Thirteen." Spain had two definite and obvious aims: to keep full commercial control of the Mississippi and to prevent the new American Republic from spreading westward. In these she had the aid of France, through such agents as Marchand, until the French Revolution struck

the sceptre out of the hand of the French king, royal cousin of the king of Spain. But Spain had another motive for her plots in Kentucky and her Indian raids on the American settlements at this time.

Spanish agents knew that that very trouble-maker, Don Francisco de Miranda, had devoted friends among noted patriots of the United States. Indeed Miranda was reputed to have fought in the War of Independence, having come here with his friend, Lafayette. They feared that the United States might lend aid to Miranda, to help him free his own country—to break the Spanish yoke not in Venezuela alone but in all South America. This, of course, is what Miranda did, hardly a dozen years later, with the aid of another Venezuelan, Bolivar, and an Argentine soldier named San Martin. But Spain was successful in preventing the young United States from lending the assistance which would have hastened the day of liberty in South America. She kept the American Republic in a ferment of anxiety about the settlements and the territory west of the Appalachians. And she did that chiefly through Wilkinson and Alexander McGillivray. It was worth, to her, all she paid them for it, and more.

The conversation was in Spanish. Lachlan could not understand it. He wondered how much it had to do with himself, as he watched the men's faces. For there was a new face in the group to-night, a face he knew. It belonged to a man named Powers, a tall thin man with mean eyes, whom Lachlan had met in James Robertson's house in Nashville, of

all places! It did not seem possible that Powers had not recognized him instantly, even as he had recognized Powers. In fact, Lachlan was certain that he had seen the look of recognition in Powers' eyes. What would McGillivray do when he learned that his adopted son was really the son of Ross Douglas, the right-hand man of James Robertson? He might continue to protect him; he might kill him. There was no telling what White Alex would do. White Alex was not a man whose thoughts and actions could be estimated in advance by anybody. But certainly Number Thirteen would consider Lachlan Douglas' presence among the Creeks a danger to his plans. So would the "Spanish Man," Miró.

"This night'll likely be yer last on earth, my laddie, if ye don't keep yer eyes open behind as well as before," he muttered to himself.

He was glad that he had had a chance to warn Blue Arrow before Powers saw him. Powers *might* not have seen the young Creek when he was last in Nashville; but if he had— No; it was safer for Blue Arrow to keep out of the way. Lachlan had enlisted Gypsy John's aid, such as it was, for Gypsy was not very intelligent.

"Gypsy John," he had said, "ye know Oomy is my friend. So ye must be my friend too. All these men, except McGillivray, are my enemies. Listen to all they say in Spanish and tell it to me."

Gypsy John would do his best, he promised. He said he would even kill any one of them, if Lachlan chose. "Only not Miró; because Miró make veree

good friend with Oomy; give Oomy freedom of Louisiana. I not can kill Miró! Oomy not like I do that. Oomy like veree much freedom of Louisiana. Can kill Valdez," he added, encouragingly. "I think Oomy like veree much I kill Valdez."

"No. Better not," Lachlan had cautioned. "But listen and remember all they say."

If he could only understand Spanish, Lachlan thought despondently. How could he send Robertson news of this conspiracy against the Americans when he could not understand a word the men were saying?

Presently Miró took the White Leader and Wilkinson indoors, for a private conference, perhaps. Nolan, Powers, Marchand, and Valdez remained where they were, with Juan Gitano close by to bring them more coffee or Spanish sweets which Marchand, in particular, was consuming at a great rate. Sometimes, playfully, he flung a small cake to Barking Water, sitting there in the shadows with Lachlan.

"I am not sure that I consider these sweet small breads more delightful than sugar cane," Wewoca remarked, after the tenth one. "I shall probably know after I have eaten more."

"When you have eaten more, you won't know anything, because you will have burst open like a pricked waterskin," Lachlan replied, grinning.

"No. My skin has the gift of stretching," Barking Water reminded him seriously.

"You're getting to look more like Oomy every day," Lachlan said. "There he comes."

The fireflies had gone to bed. Oomy therefore had deserted the fountain rim and headed for the grassy place round the foot of the torch pillar where the two boys sat. The flare of the torch lured pale fat moths and other winged insects. Frequently these reckless aviators of the gnat world scorched their wings in the flame and tumbled to earth. Oomy had become familiar with their fatalities on many other nights in Miró's gardens. This, he knew, was a particularly good lamp-post. It was on the edge of a bayou. The river's mouth makes innumerable lagoons, pools, and creeks in the flat land; and, in those days, before men attempted to control the seeping and flooding waters, it made many more. In the cane, reeds, and rushes that fringed the bayou dwelt legions of insects; many of them adventured no farther inland than this lamp-post. Slowly, ponderously and laboriously Oomy crossed the garden to his good hunting ground. He settled himself behind the pillar on the side nearest the bayou and then deceitfully drew his head in under his hat and pretended to go to sleep.

"Let's go in," said Lachlan. "I even hate looking at these men."

"No," said Barking Water; "because Gylipee Jaw is bringing another tray of those sweet small breads and the Flenchee will throw me at least one."

"Oh; all right."

Lachlan would have been even more interested in the group of men in the vine-covered arbor if he could have understood their speech. For he, him-

self, had now become the subject of their conversation.

"You are quite sure about this boy?" Valdez asked Powers.

"Positively. He is from Nashville. I have seen him there. His father is Ross Douglas, a very well-known trader and fighter, the henchman of James Robertson. He took Robertson's message to Sevier, warning him of the Spanish plot. The boy knows all about it; because he went with his father. He must have been on that journey when White Alex captured him. The father got through to Watauga safely, worse luck! Sevier immediately sent messengers into Kentucky to inform Isaac Shelby, who is Governor of Kentucky now. And he also sent messengers into Virginia. By this time the President and his Cabinet are probably considering the matter and making plans for the defence of the western country! And all that bad luck, which may prove fatal for us, is due to the pesky Douglas family!"

"Does the White Leader know this?"

Powers shrugged. "Yes. Miró told him. But the White Leader is quite mad on the subject of this boy. He says the boy no longer even remembers that he is white; and that his one ambition now is to be an emperor."

"Well, that is likely enough," said Marchand.

"It isn't!" Powers snapped back at him. "I know these Scotch frontiersmen. This man, Douglas, stands out among them for intelligence and craft and courage. He is almost as highly regarded as

Robertson himself. And the boy, too, is well reputed. That boy has no idea of being an Indian emperor! He is simply playing a deep game and watching his chance to escape and to get back to Nashville with all the information he has picked up!"

"In talking with him," said Marchand, "I have found him a stupid boy."

"You would! That's part of his game, to play the fool. He looks at me as if he had never seen me before. But I am positive he recognized me at the first glance. He has seen me in Nashville. In Tennessee and Kentucky I am thought to be merely a deer hunter. No one knows even of my connection with Wilkinson. Now this boy knows it! And he will get the news into Nashville somehow. I shall not be able to return there and finish my work for Number Thirteen. If you'd had any sense, Nolan, or you, Valdez, you'd have got some drunken Creek to stab him to death in the *Obungah Hahjo*."

"What does His Excellency say?" Marchand asked with a worried frown.

"Governor Miró fully recognizes the danger of this boy. But he also fears to anger McGillivray. General Wilkinson has used every argument to convince him that the boy must be killed. As Number Thirteen says, this is the place to do it. Because, after all, Miró has White Alex completely in his power here. He can keep him as long as he chooses. And we can probably get the Creeks to take the warpath in Tennessee without him."

"But not their allies. It is only White Alex's personal power that holds the tribes together in our interest," said Nolan.

"Curse the boy! He has made too much trouble already," Valdez said angrily. "I am for having him killed to-night."

"He has certainly turned up at the wrong time for us," Powers went on. "Number Thirteen starts back for Louisville in a few days. I start in a couple of hours. I am to get the shipment of powder and lead, which is stored at a certain point, and see that it is delivered to the Indians, so that they can take the warpath before winter stops them. Nolan is going on to Tampa on some other business of Wilkinson's. We have to act to-night about this boy, or it will be too late."

"Valdez is going back in a few days with McGillivray," said Marchand.

"Another thing that bothers me," Powers continued, "is that there was a Creek with Ross Douglas at Watauga. He had brought Ross in safely, after the boy was captured. An ugly fellow with a scarred face."

"A scarred face!" Nolan exclaimed. "Can that possibly be Blue Arrow? We'll soon see!" He called Gypsy John and told him to have Blue Arrow found and brought to them at once. But, of course, Blue Arrow could not be found. Blue Arrow had gone into hiding. He was lying among the rose vines on the top of the arbor where the men sat.

Wilkinson came out of the house and walked

swiftly to the arbor. He called Powers; and the two went some distance along the path together.

"Miró realizes that the boy must be put out of the way. But he, himself, daren't have anything to do with it," said Number Thirteen. "You'll have to attend to it, Powers. Here's my suggestion. Don't kill the boy unless you have to, but kidnap him and keep him hidden. We can then use him as a club over White Alex, to make him come down in his price. McGillivray is a thorough Scot in business! I don't give you positive orders, mind; I leave it to your best judgment. Only, Miró agrees to the kidnapping, but is afraid of the murder."

"Better kill the boy," Powers answered. "Miró can pretend to McGillivray that he is still alive."

"I leave it to you. Miró will assist to this point. He will send down to the water-front and get two or three of those ruffianly mulattoes who live there to come up this bayou to-night with a boat. If they find the boy here, lying bound on the bank by that post, they will take him away. If the boy is alive, Miró can redeem him from them later for a few gold pieces. If not, they are to sink his body in the river. Miró can blame them for the murder, if necessary; and satisfy McGillivray by having them executed. Miró always moves in these affairs in such a way that he cannot be traced."

"Well, then, the matter is simple enough."

"Oh, this affair of the boy is a trifle. I have another and a much riskier job for you. Who is that calling?" he asked abruptly.

"Miró's secretary has just come out. He called Valdez. I suppose Miró told him to send Valdez to get those mulattoes and their boat."

"Valdez has gone in? I can't see from behind this thick brush."

"Yes."

"Then listen: for we will not have another chance to talk together. I suspect that my baggage as well as yours and Nolan's is being searched by Miró's spies at this moment."

"What——?" Powers began in amazement. Wilkinson cut him short.

"Don't delay me. Time presses. I have discovered a Spanish secret, relating to their South American affairs, for which the British agent, Allan, at Louisville, will pay us at least a thousand pounds! You will deliver it to him and give the money to O'Fallon. And then you will cross the Ohio and start an Indian raid on Kentucky. Miró will pay well for the raid. I will give you a letter to O'Fallon authorizing you to draw the necessary funds. Miró won't pay in advance this time. That's proof that he suspects I may betray him to the English! With my letters to O'Fallon you will also find the letter to Allan about the South American business."

"But how will you give me the notes, if we are watched?"

"You will get rid of the boy on the brink of the bayou, there. I will send my Indian servant out here and tell him to secrete the notes, which I will fold very small, at the top of the lamp-post. When

you have settled the boy, you will reach up—fortunately you are tall—get the letters and then start up the river in your pirogue immediately. You understand?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"I hope so; for we won't be able to speak together again. What did I tell you?" he whispered. "Isn't that Valdez sneaking round behind the arbor in the effort to come on us silently and overhear what we are saying? Make an excuse to get the men in doors. Send that fat Semisole boy off somewhere; and keep Lachlan out here alone with you." He went swiftly along the path and into the house. Powers walked slowly back to the arbor, pondering his instructions. O'Fallon, as he well knew, was the man who acted as Wilkinson's banker, taking care of the funds which Number Thirteen collected by his treacheries. Powers had suspected that Wilkinson was dealing with the agents of other European states too, through Nolan; but he had not actually known it before. It was a risky game, certainly, for Wilkinson to sell America to Spain and Spain to England. But, then, Number Thirteen was money-mad! There was no risk he would not take for money; nothing and nobody he would not sell, if the price were high enough. Powers beckoned Barking Water.

"Wewoca," he said in Creek, "I have watched you eat with the greatest admiration. Nolan tells me that you say you have a strange skin which will stretch forever without bursting. Is that true?"

"Positively," Barking Water answered.

"Yet I doubt it. You must prove it to me by going to the kitchen with Gypsy John and eating all the rest of the sweets." He called the Venezuelan.

"Willingly," said Barking Water. "I take the greatest pleasure both in eating and in showing ignorant people the things they do not know. Tell Gylipee Jaw to take me to the place where there are many, sweet, small breads."

Thus easily did Powers dispose of Wewoca. Lachlan might have questioned about this incident if he had not been absorbed in something else. A moment before, he had leaned back against the pillar and looked up at the moonlit sky. And he had distinctly seen the outline of Blue Arrow's head above the arbor.

"So that's where ye've hidden yersel', eh?" he muttered. "I dinna deny I'm glad to know ye're so close. For I make no doubt I'll have my troubles before long wi' one or other o' yon yellow murderin' pack!"

CHAPTER VII

THE BOAT ON THE DARK BAYOU

NOLAN had quickly surmised Powers' reason for getting Wewoca off the scene. Evidently Powers had received orders from Wilkinson just now to make away with Lachlan. In that case it would be better to have no witnesses. So he proposed to Marchand, and to Valdez, who had now joined the group again after his unsuccessful attempt at eavesdropping, that they go indoors and play cards. Marchand, taking the hint, agreed at once. They went into the house.

"I'm not for games of chance to-night," said Valdez, yawning. "I'm too sleepy. I shall slip off to bed." He yawned again. Valdez was not at all sleepy. Miró had given him instructions to watch Wilkinson, Nolan, and Powers. Two of these men were now in the card room with Miró and his other guests. The only man Valdez had to watch was Powers.

Valdez stole out by a side door and secreted himself in the shrubbery by one corner of the house. The moon made a wide path of light to the arbor. Some of the torches were still burning. He could see Lachlan clearly under the last flickering glare of

the torch by the bayou; and he knew just where Powers was sitting in the arbor. He, too, guessed that Powers was about to make away with Lachlan; and he had no intention of interfering with that, nor of spying on Powers any closer until after the deed was done.

Lachlan was far from being a slow-witted youth. He knew that he was in deadly peril; and, as was his habit, his mind went to work at once, counting the chances for and against him. He felt sure that Powers would not use his pistol, because of the noise. For, he thought, it was evident that McGillivray had not consented to his death; because, if he had, there would be no need of this careful secrecy on the part of the other three men. Then, since he must be killed quietly, there would be no shooting. No; Powers would do one of two things. Either he would try to lure him into the arbor with the idea of seizing him and stabbing him when he was off his guard; or he would suddenly rush him. Probably the latter, he thought; because he was in a bad position for a quick escape. A dense mass of shrubs blocked him on the right; and the bayou was directly behind him. The best place to fight it out with Powers, he decided, was the clear moonlit space on the other side of the arbor. There was room there to run and to dodge. He must not kill Powers; because, if he did, McGillivray would almost certainly believe that he was still loyal to Robertson and turn against him. That would mean death.

No; he had to save his own life now without injuring Powers.

The presence of Blue Arrow on the roof troubled him a little. It would be just like Blue Arrow to jump down and knife Powers the minute Powers made a suspicious move. But if Blue Arrow could see the duel become a foot race in which Powers had the worst of it, then he would probably stay safely where he was on the roof.

"To get clear o' Powers won't be so easy as slidin' down a greased pole," he thought; "for yon man's not only a bad one but a smart one, or Number Thirteen would never bother wi' him."

Lachlan rose and stretched himself.

"Come in here; I want to talk with you," said Powers.

"I thank ye. But I'll be gettin' along now. 'Tis late," the boy answered.

"Wait a minute. I've something to say to you." Powers rose slowly and began to walk in a leisurely fashion towards Lachlan, measuring the distance between them. Lachlan, on his part, moving more quickly, kept widening that distance as he veered towards the ground on the far side of the arbor. Beyond that clear space, some thirty yards away, was a mass of cane and reeds, edging another swampy seepage of the river. The tangle and shadows of its growth would make a good hiding place. He did not dare dash towards the house; because he thought it likely that one of the other men was waiting there with his knife ready.

Powers saw by Lachlan's manoeuvres, that the boy knew his intention. So, without more words, he rushed at him. Lachlan led the chase out on the moonlit sward and began to play with Powers an Indian game of run and tag. By the tactics of this game the pursued remained still and alert, saving his wind and strength, while the pursuer tried to guess which way he would dart under attack and then exerted himself to head him off and drive him into some disadvantageous position where he could be caught. Powers also had played that game with Indian warriors; and he was good at it. But he lost a point in the very beginning by losing his temper. The coolness and impudence of this youth in deliberately turning his murderous purpose into a sport made him furious.

"I'll slit your throat for that!" he snarled; and foolishly dashed straight at the spot where Lachlan stood. Of course, when he reached it, Lachlan was somewhere else.

"This is a good game," the boy jeered at him; "ye should learn it, though, Mr. Powers. For I'm tellin' ye, 'tis no game for fools."

"I learned it before you were born," Powers snapped back at him. He walked towards him now, observing acutely how the boy's body was poised and guessing that Lachlan's next leap would be to the left. He feinted a rush to the right. But Lachlan knew that trick, too. He feinted towards the left, then dashed in a bee line for the cane brake. Powers lost several seconds by this move. Furious

at his failure, he righted himself and sped after his quarry, which had disappeared from his view in the black density of the tall reeds. He crept along the edge of the cane, stopping every few seconds to listen for a rustle or for the panting breath that would betray to him the presence of the hunted. As if on purpose to annoy him, the frogs, which had begun a desultory tuning up of their bassoons and saxophones a half hour ago, now seemed to release all their orchestras at once in every swamp and bayou. By the racket they made, there might have been a million of them. The cane brake and this swamp were evidently packed with them, all bent on celebrating the moonlight with song. Powers could hear nothing but their barking bedlam. His rage tempted him to fire his pistol into the cane on the wild chance of hitting the boy. But he thought better of it. This thing must be done quietly.

While Powers was slowly creeping along the cane brake, and Lachlan was crouched watchfully within its shadows, another adventure was happening by the lamp-post on the bank of the bayou. Valdez, screened by the shrubs, had seen Lachlan lead Powers in the dance across the garden and finally out of sight. He was considering following them when his attention was caught by a tall Ohio Indian whom he knew to be Wilkinson's body servant. The Ohio emerged from the side door. He held a small fold of paper. Valdez saw it distinctly as the man came out of the lighted hall into the garden. He watched the Indian, who had no suspicion of his

presence, and saw him go down to the lamp-post and reach up to the top of it, and, lastly, extinguish the torch. An uninformed onlooker would have thought that the servant had been sent out to put out the last light. He saw him come back and re-enter the house and noted that he no longer had the paper. It did not take Valdez any time to deduce that Wilkinson had sent Powers a secret message. That, of course, was what the two of them had arranged in the brief interview which he had failed to overhear. Miró must have that note without delay!

Valdez hurried to the lamp-post. He could see the ghostly gleam of the paper at the top of the post. But he could not grasp it immediately because it was out of his reach. Valdez was not a tall man. He looked about for something—a stool or a log, or a bench—which he could shove against the post and stand on in order to reach the paper. Then he noticed that there was a rock behind the pillar. It was not sufficiently high to enable him to reach the paper easily; but he thought that, by standing on tiptoe on top of it, he could eventually get the note. Being a man of action, he translated the thought into the deed at once.

Now, the real reason why Valdez was always having embarrassing experiences with Oomy was primarily because Valdez insisted on ignoring Oomy's presence on the earth. Valdez wanted to forget Oomy. Oomy was never to blame; it was never Oomy's fault in the least. It had not been Oomy's fault that Valdez had been obliged to fetch

him from Venezuela, nor that all New Orleans had laughed about it; nor that Miró had given Oomy Valdez' medal. Then, too, that blue-bottle episode on the pirogue had not been Oomy's fault. It would never have happened if Valdez had, as Lachlan said, washed his hands like a Christian; or if he had not forgotten that Oomy was sleeping with an eye or two open right behind him. It had always been a mistake for Valdez to forget about Oomy. It was a mistake now. Because Oomy was not a rock. Oomy was a live turtle. He was a gentle turtle: but he was also a dignified turtle. He objected to being stepped on. When Valdez mounted him and poised with difficulty on one tiptoe, straining his arm until he could just reach the note and knock it loose, Oomy, disliking the weight on his shell, humped up and slid it off—very naturally.

With a gasping curse Valdez, completely overbalanced, pitched backwards, head down, into the shallow water and deep oozy liquid mud of the bayou. Oomy did not even turn his head to see what had happened to the heavy annoyance which he had shaken off. Oomy was watching something white flutter down, mothlike, from the base of the dead torch. Snap went Oomy's jaws. And the secret instructions of Number Thirteen disappeared at one gulp into the very best of all possible places that could have been found for them! Then Oomy crawled away slowly towards the arbor. He had long ago found out that the good hunting ceased when the torch was extinguished; and, since his

slumbers had already been so unpleasantly disturbed there, he preferred to seek a quieter spot. He went on his way methodically, blameless as ever.

Valdez dug himself up out of the mud, choked and blinded. He stumbled wrathfully towards his own quarters. He had not forgotten about the note; but he left it to take its chances in the bayou where he thought it had fallen. The most important thing in the world to Valdez was his personal dignity. Compared with that, notes, plots, and counterplots faded into insignificance. Spain herself could sink in mid-ocean before he would allow the funny jokers of New Orleans to get another Oomy story on him!

Meanwhile the duel between Powers and Lachlan had waxed hotter. Lachlan, convinced that Powers would not use his pistol, wanted to lure his enemy into the cane thicket at the bottom of the garden, so that he himself could sneak out of another part of it and make a dash for Gypsy John's cabin behind the house. Lachlan had become very tired of that marshy cane brake and wanted to get out of it. So he played a mean trick on Powers. He pulled up a small clod of earth and threw it. It fell with a rustle through the cane some distance away. Powers thought Lachlan had made the noise by the movement of his body in the cane, and plunged in to get him. Lachlan watched him disappear, knew his back was turned, and silently ducked out and raced over the garden. But Powers almost instantly suspected the trick when he found

no sign of the boy and heard no more sound from him. He swung round and saw Lachlan and, by a very speedy rush, he cut off Lachlan's retreat towards the house. To escape him, Lachlan had to swing around the back of the arbor; which brought him again to the edge of the bayou. Powers realized now that the chase would probably go on all night. And he had no more time to give to it. Even now the crew of his pirogue were waiting for him to come aboard. He had to get Number Thirteen's note from the lamp-post and be off without any more delay. He would have to use his pistol. What helped him reach that decision was the sight of a boat slipping into the mouth of the bayou. The villainous mulattoes from the waterfront were coming to get the boy, as they had been ordered. If the sound of the shot brought McGillivray out of the house, thought Powers, there was a chance that the body would already be hidden in the boat. And he could pretend he had shot his pistol off accidentally. If the boy's body were discovered, he could accuse the boatmen of the killing. Miró had even arranged for that, according to Wilkinson! It was safe enough to shoot the boy now. So Powers drew his pistol and veered round the front of the arbor, not following Lachlan but planning to meet him. Blue Arrow, on the roof, had not taken his eyes off Powers since the chase began. He saw the glint of Powers' pistol in the moonlight.

Lachlan, stealing round from the back of the

arbor, met Powers coming towards him, pistol in hand.

"'Tis all up wi' me, unless he misses," he thought.

To his amazement, the pistol dropped from Powers' hand! And Powers, himself, crumpled in a heap on the bank. For a moment Lachlan stood stock still. He could make nothing of this! He heard a sound in the vines of the arbor. Blue Arrow leaped down beside him.

"Come quick," the Indian said, pulling his arm. Mechanically Lachlan let Blue Arrow draw him into the arbor.

"What happened to Powers?" Lachlan queried, not expecting any answer.

"Dead," said Blue Arrow. "I shoot with blow-gun. See." He thrust the silent weapon before Lachlan's eyes. "Hush. Not speak. Men come in boat. I see from up there."

Crouched noiselessly, scarcely breathing, they saw the boat draw in. They saw two husky dark figures leap ashore. They heard ejaculations and words in a language they did not know, as the two figures discovered the body of Powers, hoisted it and carried it to the boat. One of the men returned for the pistol. Then they rowed away towards the mouth of the bayou. They had obeyed their instructions. They had found a body on the bank; and they had taken it away to sink it with stones in the river so that no trace of it would ever be found!

"Ye saved my life, Blue Arrow," Lachlan said, clasping the young Creek's hand.

"Yes. You my brother."

"You and I will spend the night with Gypsy John," Lachlan said in Creek. At that moment Gypsy John came into the arbor with a lantern.

"Hullo," he said genially. "You talk with my Oomy? Oomy like best sleep here."

True enough, Oomy was slumbering soundly in the farthest corner, oblivious as usual to any event that buzzed around him, so long as the event was not a fly.

"See!" Gypsy John went on, looking very pleased. He held up a small gold coin. "General Wilkinson give me for make so good songs for him. First, I think I make gold earring for Susanna. But Susanna got veree pretty bell; she like bell veree much. No; I make one more bracelet for Oomy, like that Valdez bracelet. Veree nice present for Oomy from General Wilkinson."

And that was entirely as it should be; though Number Thirteen would not have thought so, had he known all! Oomy had prevented a Spanish secret from being sold to England; and, thereby, he had repaid Governor Miró for his courtesy in giving him the freedom of Louisiana. So Miró's dear friend and ally, Wilkinson, might well reward him for that! He had prevented a bloody raid from being launched by the Ohio Indians on the Kentucky settlements; and, for that, he was certainly entitled to receive, at the least, a gold bracelet from an American soldier who stood so high as Wilkinson in his country's trust and favor!

The two boys stole softly across the sward with Gypsy John, leaving Oomy, the true hero of the hour, sleeping peacefully under his hat.

Lachlan did not puzzle long about the advent of the dark boatmen. He guessed that they had come for him. But they had found Powers! No one but himself and Blue Arrow knew what had happened. For this night, at any rate, he was safe. He would not have to face Wilkinson, Valdez, Marchand, and Nolan for some hours yet, to annoy them with the information that that disturbing lad, Lachlan Douglas, was not dead. To-morrow—? He refused to worry. Let to-morrow take care of itself!

CHAPTER VIII

TWO WISE OWLS

THE indifference to danger and even to death which the Indian peril bred in boys of the frontier served Lachlan well that night. It sent him to sleep as soundly as the proverbial log, in Gypsy John's quarters. He awoke early, fresh and alert, rolled up his blanket and, going outside, threw himself down under a tree to think things over. The pivot of the situation, he saw, was the White Leader. If McGillivary had turned against him, then his chances of life were so small as to be invisible. He could count on Blue Arrow against every enemy except McGillivray. Lachlan knew, without questioning why, that Blue Arrow would not raise his weapon against White Alex even for his dearest friend. And, to Lachlan himself, the idea of seeing McGillivray meet the same fate as Powers was repugnant.

"I could never strike at the White Leader," he muttered; "his spell is on me too strong." There was nothing to be gained by trying to reason against that spell of Alex's. Lachlan knew that he loved the man.

"Are you talking to yourself or to spirits?"

Barking Water asked politely. "Because if you are talking to spirits I will not interrupt you." Wewoca had emerged from his slumbers also and had come out to join Lachlan.

"I am talking to the spirit of Barking Water who fell last night on the warpath, slain by too many cakes," Lachlan answered with a grin.

"Ah! those sweet small breads!" Wewoca sighed blissfully and dropped down beside him. "Offer many of them to my spirit when I am truly dead. You need not scatter much tobacco on my grave, because I don't care for it. But be sure to put many sweet things there, especially sugar cane and those small breads. I would like also some turkey gizzards and——"

"Since you will live to be ninety, Wewoca, don't give me the list now, for I shall forget it. I never saw a man who looked less like a ghost than you do —you black rolypoly!"

"Here come Blue Arrow and Gylipee Jaw. Laklan Chate, you should be proud that your friends love you so much that they seek you at all times. I, myself, am only happy when I am with you."

"Except when you are in the kitchen with the cakes."

"Ah, well! The stomach has its love, no less than the heart." Barking Water pronounced this bit of wisdom with profound solemnity. "However, before we leave this subject of feeding my spirit let me instruct you; since, while I do intend to live very long, an accident may happen even to so

wise a man as Wewoca. The spirit does not eat the real food on the grave."

"No?" Lachlan queried politely.

"Not at all. The spirit of the dead man eats the spirit of the food. Therefore I am often afraid when I think of my death; because I doubt that the flavor remains as strong and delicious when the food becomes a spirit."

"Eat less now, Wewoca, and live longer!" Lachlan advised him, chuckling.

Gypsy John and Blue Arrow joined the two boys, laden with food—steaks and flat bread baked in the ashes, coffee and honey. They served themselves from a few wooden dishes with hunting knives and fingers. Of course the delectable smell drew the flies: so it was not long before Oomy was in their midst. Early as it was, Oomy had already made the rounds of the garden and, as was his morning custom, had wound up at his master's cabin. The gentle tinkle of a bell for some moments foretold the arrival of Susanna, who had been down to drink from the bayou. After rubbing her nose against John's shoulder and Oomy's shell, she began to crop the grass near by.

The group, eating lustily in the mellow sunshine and cracking occasional jokes, most of them at Wewoca's expense, seemed an entirely happy one over which no dark-winged peril brooded. Lachlan paused between mouthfuls of honeyed bread, to observe the turtle and the mule. These curiously assorted friends appeared to have worked out a

perfect system of demand and supply. Flies collected on Susanna's damp tail, which was odorous with the slime of the bayou. Susanna gently swung them towards Oomy who snapped them off deftly. Or Susanna drooped her head, when flies settled on her nose, and sneezed them off into Oomy's waiting jaws. Oomy's fiery little eyes seemed to gauge perfectly the distance and the moment to strike; and Susanna evidently had complete confidence in his ability to help himself without hurting her. No such accident occurred as that which had happened to Valdez' fingers. Lachlan turned, with a smile of delighted amusement, to call Wewoca's attention —and saw a long black shadow fall upon the grass. The sight of it seemed to send a cold wave over him. He looked up. The White Leader was standing close by. Lachlan kept on smiling; but every nerve in his body grew tense. He felt that the decisive moment had come. Before he had finished his honey, he would know McGillivray's intent towards him: whether he was to live or die. McGillivray's face was stern and sombre, his eyes seemed to burn. Lachlan met his gaze unflinchingly, without stirring. He knew that mood of White Alex's. It was the Creek chieftain who stood before him, the alien who hated and distrusted all white men, the fanatic. And instinctively, with the craftiness in which the frontier life had schooled him, he pitted himself against the Indian in McGillivray, determined that the white man should rule. He would not greet him as a young Creek

should greet his chief, nor as a Creek son should greet his father. He sat still in his careless attitude and spoke with casual good humor as one Scotch Highlander to another.

"Alex McGillivray," he said, "I'm glad to see ye out this bonnie mornin'. If Gypsy John hadna caught me wi' a juicy breakfast I'd have been after wakin' ye to take a walk wi' me."

"Where did you sleep?" McGillvray asked him sternly in Creek. "You were hiding from me."

"Oh, ay. In a manner o' speakin' ye might call it that." He grinned. "I slept wi' John and this red man," pointing to Blue Arrow, "an' yon black man," with a nod towards Wewoca, "an' Oomy an' Susanna an' a couple o' fireflies an' a pack o' mosquitoes, for all the world like Noah i' the ark wi' Shem an' Ham an' the animals."

Lachlan had won the first point for he saw the hint of a smile cross McGillivray's face.

"Have ye had yer breakfast yet, Alex McGillivray?" he asked abruptly.

"No," McGillivray answered inadvertently in English. Lachlan felt a thrill of triumph as he heard that English monosyllable.

"John," he shouted merrily, "get ye into the kitchen an' cook a steak. Alex McGillivray's eatin' breakfast, hunter's style, wi' his son, Lachlan McGillivray."

He heard Gypsy John leap up and hurry off into the cabin but he did not turn his head. He kept his keen, twinkling, gray eyes on Alex. A glint of

humor softened the chief's sombre gaze, and presently he smiled. He said something in Gaelic.

"That's no fair o' ye!" Lachlan protested, his eyes dancing with glee. "For ye ken weel I've forgot every word o' my mother tongue."

McGillivray flung himself down on the ground beside him. "If I say it in Latin or Spanish will you answer? Or is it only Creek that my son cannot speak this morning?"

"Oh, as to Creek," the boy replied very indifferently, "I'll be speakin' Creek all my life. I'm on a holiday from Creek."

"All your life," White Alex repeated. "I'm glad you realize that. Shall I tell you what I said in Gaelic? I said: 'Though the young owl is a wise bird, he should remember that the old owl has been a wise bird much longer!' In other words, Laklan Chate, you have been trying to play a game with me."

Lachlan colored with confusion. McGillivray's mocking smile did nothing towards soothing his feelings. But, in spite of his burning face, he looked the White Leader in the eyes proudly.

"Do ye blame me for it?" he demanded with a touch of defiance.

The mocking amusement still lingered in McGillivray's eyes as he answered:

"No. I only criticize your conceit in thinking you could play a game I wouldn't see through!"

"Oh, ay," Lachlan admitted ruefully, "ye've got me there."' Then suddenly he flashed his

infectious grin at him, his eyes sparkling, and said, "But what's the odds if ye *do* see through it—so long as I *win* my game?"

"You think you've won? How is that?" with a puzzled look.

"Ay, to be sure I've won. Didn't ye come stalkin' me this mornin' wi' a face black as thunder an' ready to jab yer knife into me on account o' things certain gentlemen were sayin' to ye about me last night? Ay, ye can't deny it! An' didn't I change yer mind an' get ye to sittin' here alongside o' me an' feelin' friendly? Ye can't deny that neither! An' if all the time ye saw what I was after, still ye *did* it—an' that's winnin' the game!"

"Quite true," McGillivray admitted after a moment's silence. "Ah, here comes my steak," as Gypsy John set it before him.

"An' glad I am to see ye usin' yer knife on a steak an' not on me, Alex McGillivray!"

McGillivray laughed shortly. It was the first time Lachlan had heard him laugh. This was indeed his hour of triumph. McGillivray's face almost immediately resumed its sombre cast. He turned to the three others and gestured a dismissal. Gypsy John and Blue Arrow went into the cabin; Wewoca strolled off towards the kitchen of Miró's mansion.

"So the young owl is wiser than I thought, eh? I like courage and I like brains, Laklan Chate; and you have shown me both this morning. But I warn you not to use them to play me false; for I

would never forgive you and I would punish you horribly."

"The Hielanders haven't the name o' bein' traitors," was Lachlan's answer.

"True. Now, lad, forget the game and tell me the truth. You say some of my friends want you out of the way, and I admit it. What happened between you and those same friends last night—that is, between you and Powers and, possibly, Valdez?"

"Ye're leavin' out Williamson an' Nolan an' Marchand," Lachlan said, not because White Alex's answer to that remark would be important, but because he wanted to gain time to think. How much dared he tell to McGillivray? He didn't know.

"Yes. They came in to play cards. Nolan, by the way, left for the ship this morning as I came out of the house." And, because he guessed the boy's state of mind, he added, "I may as well tell you that I looked out of my window last night and saw you and Powers playing tag round the summer house. It troubled me afterwards; so I dressed and came down. When I opened the door I saw at first only the stern of a boat disappearing among the rushes of the bayou. Then I saw you come out of the arbor with Blue Arrow. So I knew you were safe. I supposed that, if Powers had really been intending to do you any injury, the appearance of Blue Arrow had made him change his mind."

"Ay—oh, ay," Lachlan said slowly, "that was the

way o' it. Blue Arrow changed his mind—in a manner o' speakin'."

"Powers had no right to be fooling like that last night. You might have knifed him in self-defence and then all our plans would have been ruined."

"How's that—if ye don't object to me askin'?"

"Powers will visit the Choctaw and the Cherokee to tell them when and where we are all to meet in November for the two raids—first to wipe out Nashville and then Watauga. He himself will meet our combined forces with a boatload of ammunition. It is the hunting season and the white men will not expect us; they will be less wary than in summer. And, also, many of their own warriors will be away from the forts and out hunting."

"But the Indians'll starve next winter if they don't kill an' jerk deer meat in October an' November. They'll have nothin' to depend on for food but the fur beasties they set their traps for i' midwinter," Lachlan protested. For all the warriors, who were also the hunters, of three large nations to refrain from hunting when the deer were fat, meant starvation throughout the Indian country. He was amazed that McGillivray should be a party to such a mad plan.

"No. Because Miró and Wilkinson will send pirogues laden with food for us. We will have less food than usual, but we will not starve. Powers knew that he must start on that errand at midnight; and that is why I am surprised at his attack on you. If he had been stopped from going—well,

you can see! There would not be enough powder for all of us; and the Cherokee and Choctaw warriors, knowing nothing of the raid, would be off scattered through the woods for several hundred miles; and the whole affair would come to nothing."

"Ay. 'Twas a verra bad mistake Mr. Powers made," Lachlan said thoughtfully. His heart was pounding with excitement. Blue Arrow's silent shot from the Venezuelan blowgun had saved not only Lachlan Douglas' life; it had saved Nashville and Watauga! He coughed to clear his throat, which was tightening under the pressure of his emotion.

"Did Powers go away in that boat I saw?"

"Ay," the boy answered truthfully if a trifle huskily; "Mr. Powers went away i' yon boat."

"Good. Then it is all right."

"Ay—as ye say," slowly, " 'tis all right."

"But, if I had not asked you, you would have told me nothing. You don't trust me?"

Lachlan turned and looked his foster father in the eyes. "No. I dinna trust ye a'together, White Alex; for ye hate white men, an' I'm white. An' ye have great plans that ye'd never let a boy like me interfere wi', even though ye call him yer son. An' I knew yer friends, that'll help ye wi' yer great plans, were tellin' ye I'd be the ruin o' it all an' ye should let them kill me. An' I thought likely ye'd agree to it. For ye never saw me till a few months back, when ye tied me to a tree to burn me. An' so, what is Lachlan to the White Leader that would count against great plans an' old friends?"

"What you are to me—" he paused. "I will not tell you now. I will say only that I love you as if you were indeed the son of my blood. But there is one, if he be still living, whom I love more—my father. And I care more for my vengeance upon his enemies than I care for you. You are safe as long as you don't try to step in between me and that vengeance. If you do, you will perish. Now I will speak of something else. The old owl has to be at least as wise as the young one if he is to get out of New Orleans alive!"

"What's that ye're sayin'?" Lachlan exclaimed, astonished.

"Those dear old friends of mine, especially Miró and Wilkinson, find me rather expensive. You look puzzled. Miró pays me thirty thousand pounds a year for my influence with the red tribes." He smiled grimly. "I'm a Scot and a man of business. I have no objection to the feathers and jewels and the titles they give me; but I don't move my Indians without my price in money. Wilkinson turns green whenever he thinks of that money going to me and not to him! If the Great Warrior, Tustunnuc, were chief in my place—well, they could buy Tustunnuc with a few witch-doctor tricks and a handful of beads. If no attempt is made on my life here and I am permitted freely to start home on the day set—shall I tell you what that will mean?"

"It'll mean that ye've made them scared to lift a hand at ye, the traitors!" Lachlan cried.

The faint bitter smile crossed White Alex's face

again. "Not at all. It will mean that they have postponed my demise until the raid. You know something of our Creek government by now. I am the peace chief and I am supreme, except on the warpath. In actual battle Tustunnuc, the War Leader, is supreme and I am second to him. If they succeed in buying Tustunnuc, he can even order my death on the warpath without being called to account for it by the tribe—above all if the raid is successful; as of course, with twenty thousand warriors, it will be. If we go freely, Laklan Chate, and if Valdez returns with us—above all, if Valdez goes with us—you can be sure that they have sound reasons for believing that Tustunnuc will not say no. Then Number Thirteen will get the thirty thousand per year which Miró has been paying me."

"How many Creeks can ye count on?"

"A good many. But it is likely that just one of them will be told to kill me. Tustunnuc may tell no one. He may do it himself—or Valdez may—as we attack Nashville; so that the others will think some one inside the fort shot me. If I fall, there will be no safety for you in that country. So I am going to send you with the autumn caravan to Pensacola, with a letter to Mr. Leslie, my partner at the trading house there. If I live, I will come for you."

"No, you won't!" Lachlan shouted. He sprang to his feet. His face was flushed, his eyes snapped, and his words tumbled out over one another in hot indignation. "Do ye think I'm a coward, Alex

McGillivray, that ye'd send me sneakin' off to Pensacola? Do ye think I'm such a skunk I'd be leavin' ye in danger after eatin' at yer table an' hearin' ye call me yer son? Send me to Pensacola? No, ye won't! No, ye won't! For I'm takin' the warpart wi' ye! Not to fight my own people; for, I'm warnin' ye, I'll never fire a shot at Nashville. But I'm goin' along to keep watch over yersel', White Alex; an' I'll kill the man that lifts gun or knife at yer back. Pensacola? No, ye won't! Not me!"

McGillivray looked up at Lachlan in silence for a moment. Then he rose and put his two hands heavily on the boy's shoulders, and stood so, his head bent and his eyes boring into Lachlan's.

"Is that the way of it?" he said at last in a low tone with that mournfully tender inflection which always affected Lachlan so deeply.

"That's the way o' it, White Alex!"

Alex's fingers tightened hard about the slim muscular shoulders. He sighed deeply, as if the emotion roused in him by Lachlan's loyalty and affection wounded him as much as it rejoiced him. Then, recovering himself, he smiled and said softly:

"So that is how the owl story ends, eh? The two wise owls fly away through the dark together!"

Abruptly, before Lachlan could speak, he withdrew his hands, swung around and strode swiftly away towards the house.

CHAPTER IX

THE CURSE OF THE TURTLE-GOD

A WEEK later, McGillivray said to Lachlan:

"We are leaving to-day without hindrance. And Valdez is going with us. It falls out as I guessed it would! During the raid was much the safest time to strike at me. What have you seen in New Orleans that you would like to take home? I will buy it for you."

Lachlan looked up at him eagerly. "I've been wonderin' if I dared ask ye for somethin'. I'm wantin' it verra bad."

"What? Out with it!"

"Well, ye see—well—do ye suppose ye could get Mr. Miró to let Gypsy John an' Oomy an' Susanna go home wi' me? It fair breaks my heart to think o' leavin' Oomy. An', o' course, John couldna part wi' him. An' Oomy needs Susanna when he has to move in a hurry, him bein' slow on his feet. They're powerfu' friendly, Oomy an' Susanna."

McGillivray smiled. "I'll ask Governor Miró. I think he'll consent."

And so it turned out. A week later, two pirogues went upstream. In the front and larger one, captained by Gypsy John, was McGillivray's party.

In the smaller one, which was affixed by a chain to the front boat, were the baggage, some bundles of dried hay, Susanna and Oomy. Nothing could have exceeded the delight of Lachlan and Barking Water, in particular, at the presence of the mule and the turtle; unless it were the wrath and disgust of Valdez. To Valdez, Oomy had ceased to be a turtle. Oomy had become an image of evil fate pursuing him, driving him into a condition which, to his pride, was worse than death—namely, eternal ridicule! He hoped perpetually that the smaller pirogue would capsize, or be snagged and sunk by a piece of floating timber and that Oomy would drown. But nothing of the sort happened. So far from being harmed, Oomy was exalted by the change of scene. In New Orleans he had had the freedom of the state as a citizen. In the Creek country he became something resembling a god. For, when the Indians saw him riding solemnly into the town in his velvet-lined basket on Susanna's back, they supposed at once that he had been brought to them by the White Leader because he was possessed of some special and very powerful magic. The chief Medicine Man made a witch song for him; and all the women and children caught flies for him. On the day when Gypsy John hammered General Wilkinson's gold coin into a bracelet and put it on his other wrinkled wrist, the whole town held a celebration with prayers and feasting and dances from sunrise to moonrise. Valdez, secretly seething with fury, had to pass with the warriors before Oomy and

make obeisance to him. He dared not refuse nor show his disgust. If he had, his life would not have been worth two flies! To the Creek mind, a slight put upon Oomy would call down the vengeful curse of the Turtle-god on their entire nation; and would bring inevitable disaster to their warriors in the great war for the extermination of the white race, on which they were about to embark.

The atmosphere of awe investing Oomy spread to include Gypsy John and Susanna; though both of them, like Oomy, remained in complete ignorance of the fact. The Indians looked on Gypsy John as the Turtle-god's own special high medicine priest. About Susanna's precise rank they were in some doubt; but they did not doubt at all that she was what they now named her—"Most-Sacred-Mule."

The preparations for war began speedily. At frequent intervals, daily, the war drums beat out their dull boding thunder in all the Creek towns as the warriors took the trail for the national headquarters. In McGillivray's town the same sinister sound greeted these warriors on their arrival. The low, thudding, irregular monotone was like the angry blood in the veins of thousands of madmen, pulsing audibly. Even after dark descended and the drums were silent, Lachlan seemed to hear it still in his sleep. Three days before the departure for war, the warriors began the holy three-days fast. During this time they held no intercourse with their families. The leading braves spent the three days and nights in the huge council hall listening to the

orators, of whom, of course, the White Leader was the principal one. This was the McGillivray the boy shuddered away from, the fanatic, the tiger hungry for blood, the menacing figure which the men of Nashville called "that Creek devil." Yet drawn by an irresistible fascination, which he could not have explained, Lachlan crept, time and time again, into the throng in the square before the council house. He pushed through to a place from which he could see into the hall—see past the line of women who circled the building, waving feather fans and chanting softly, past the crouching drummers, past the seated warriors, naked but for their war paint, to the towering figure of the strange and terrible man he loved, feared, shrank from, yet to whom he had passionately pledged his life. He would listen to that demoniacal oratory, with its reiterated refrain, like the savage monotone of the war drums—*"Wipe out the white men"*—until his heart seemed about to burst; and, unable to bear the misery of it any longer, he would slip out of the crowd, out of the town, and rushing into the forest, throw himself on the ground in a torment of horror and grief.

He was lying there, face downward, in the twilight, on the day before the march, when he felt a touch on his shoulder. He swung round, to see Blue Arrow squatting beside him.

"I saw that my brother was in trouble; so I followed," Blue Arrow said in Creek. "Tell me your sorrow."

But Lachlan could not explain to Blue Arrow all that he felt. It was not clear even to himself. Yet he did not want to seem to rebuff his friend's sympathy by refusing to answer. He wondered if Blue Arrow knew of the danger threatening McGillivray and thought this a good time to speak of it. Blue Arrow would understand readily how Alex's peril must distress him; and it would seem to him the true answer to his question.

"I already know of this," Blue Arrow said, when Lachlan had finished speaking; "but I said nothing to you, because White Alex did not tell me that you knew."

"Then he told you, himself?"

"Yes. It was for your sake. If a man, either Tustunnuc or Valdez, kills the White Leader, you, as his son, should kill that man, according to our custom. But White Alex says that, because you are only his adopted son, you need not take vengeance on his slayer, if another man will do it for you. So he said that I must act for you. Therefore, it is all arranged. If White Alex is murdered I will kill the man who is guilty."

Lachlan looked puzzled. "It is kind of him to wish to save me; and you are generous to be willing. But I thought that such vengeance could only be taken by a near kinsman—by his son, if the murdered man has one; and, if not by his son, then by his brother, always by the nearest relative. You are not related to him by blood, are you?"

Blue Arrow did not reply immediately. Presently he said: "All Creeks are kinsmen."

Still doubtful, Lachlan asked:

"Do you mean that all Creeks consider themselves as brothers to their chief and therefore any one of them can avenge him?" He suspected, without seeing a cause for his suspicion, that some mystery lay behind the matter of delegating blood vengeance to Blue Arrow. He peered up at his friend curiously. The Indian's head was averted, his lids were lowered.

"Is that why the White Leader told you to take the vengeance, Blue Arrow?" he insisted.

"Yes," Blue Arrow answered in a low tone; "that is why."

"That seems natural enough," Lachlan said to himself aloud in English. But he did not believe it. Presently he said in Creek:

"I will ask White Alex."

Blue Arrow wheeled round and caught Lachlan's wrist.

"Never speak of this to the White Leader. And do not speak much of me to him. I, your brother, ask this."

"Then I promise it to you. I will not ask it and I will not speak much of you to him. Yet—I seem to remember that Wewoca said you were a sort of kinsman of Alex's. Why——?"

"Here comes Wewoca, also looking for you," Blue Arrow interrupted. "Let us go to meet him. Wewoca talks too much: tell him to be silent about

White Alex. He will be safer. Yet Wewoca is your true friend also."

As the three friends returned to the village together, Barking Water said:

"You may not believe me, Laklan Chate, because I forgot to mention it at the time; but, at the very first moment when I saw Oomy on the boat, I knew that he was a god. You remember too, that, as soon as Oomy saw Valdez, he knew that Valdez was a Spaniard and therefore a bad man, and bit him? Only a turtle that was truly a god-turtle could know on the instant that Valdez was a Spaniard and therefore a man who should be bitten."

"That cannot be denied, Wewoca," Lachlan answered, with a grin.

"At dawn," Wewoca went on, "we take the warpath. I am glad, because, on the march to Nashville, we will eat. The only objection I have to these religious ceremonies is the fasting. While I intend to show myself a brave warrior and a worthy son of my father, I shall take good care not to be killed. Because all this fasting to please the war spirits makes me fear that the food in the spirit world is neither excellent nor plentiful. Indeed, is that not proved by the very look of the departed when they appear to us in answer to the Medicine Man's magic? They come as ghosts, they are like shadows, one can see through them. Would that be so if they were well fed?" He began to chant: "Oh, Turtle-god, kind Turtle-god, riding on Most-

Sacred-Mule, Turtle-god, protect Wewoca on the warpath; let Wewoca live and eat!"

The muster of the warriors at dawn was impressive. First came the old men, the witch doctors, and the women. They stood in two semi-circles at the entrance to the town, chanting. The braves formed in line, took up the war chant as the drums began to beat, and marched out at a trot, led by Tustunnuc. Lachlan looked keenly at the Great Warrior as he went by. The Creek War Leader was a big brawny man with a face that was crudely savage and crafty in expression and decidedly ugly as to modeling; it did not indicate a degree of intelligence much above that of a wolf. Lachlan thought that McGillivray's estimate of Tustunnuc, as a man who could be bought with a few tricks of magic and a handful of beads, was probably correct. Only the most renowned braves went out in the first party with Tustunnuc. Next in line came Gypsy John leading Susanna, with Oomy riding in his basket, and a bale of hay tied on behind. Directly behind the Turtle-god, McGillivray walked alone, followed immediately by Lachlan and Wewoca and the other boys who had shared their initiation as warriors. And behind them came Valdez with Blue Arrow at his back; the rest of the red army brought up the rear. Some of them chanted, in marching:

"Oh, Turtle-god, Turtle-god,
Riding on Most-Sacred-Mule——"

At dusk on the fourth day they reached the rendezvous, about forty miles east of Nashville. Here, had Powers lived to fulfill his mission, they would have found the depot of ammunition and several thousand Choctaw and Cherokee warriors. They made camp and waited; expecting to see their allies arrive in the morning. Having no inkling of Powers' fate they did not doubt that he, too, would appear in the morning with the pirogue laden with powder and lead. After having eaten meat which they had killed on the way, they stretched themselves on the ground and slept. The only troubled soul among them was Gypsy John. He confided to Lachlan that he was worried about Susanna, who had not been accustomed to such strenuous travel.

"You hear how much she heehaw all day, veree loud big heehaw?" Lachlan admitted that all the world must have heard it. "Susanna do that when she veree mad. When Susanna get mad she one dangerous woman. She bite everybody but me an' Oomy. She kick. An' you never see how far the thing go that she kick! She grab with teeth an' throw somebody maybe one mile! Susanna veree strong woman. I tell you true, in all my life I never see Susanna so mad like to-night; because Injuns make her walk too much." He went on to say that he thought Susanna might be mollified if he tethered her near her best friends, with Oomy beside her and a fat bundle of hay under her nose. Therefore he would tie her alongside of the brush shelter which Blue Arrow had constructed for McGillivray and

Lachlan on the high brink of the river, rather apart from the rest of the tribe. He himself would lie down on the ground just out of reach of her heels; so that she could not hurt him while mistaking him for a log, perhaps, or for anything else interesting to kick.

The camp was soon in slumber. The only wakeful ones were Lachlan, who was suffering torment over this attack on Nashville; Blue Arrow, who was keeping his eye on the snoring Tustunnuc; Valdez, who had work to do before dawn; and Susanna. Susanna's appetite had been curbed on the forced march and she was now compensating her cavernous interior for unnatural neglect.

The first faint lessening of the blackness had set in when Valdez finally gained the proximity of McGillivray's shelter. It was still too dark to see, but the steady munching of Susanna guided him. He made no noise; even Lachlan's keen ears did not detect his approach. His knife was in his hand, ready for the thrust—when fate overthrew him. He located the sleeping McGillivray and, with poised blade, made a swift noiseless rush. But his toes caught under the low horny eaves of Oomy's shell and he plunged violently forward into Susanna's hay. An infuriated trumpeting "heehaw" rent the dawn. On the instant both Gypsy John and McGillivray awoke and sprang up. Lachlan, already awake, was out of the shelter like a shot. In the dim gray light, that was hardly light as yet, he had just time to make out Valdez' outlines

sprawled upon the hay, before Susanna drew her heels in, humped her mighty back, dropped her long thick head, opened her huge mouth of iron, seized the inedible intruder into her midnight meal by a bunch of clothing, lifted him, shook him from side to side as if testing his flying capacity as a projectile, and then flung him from her with all the engine force in her powerful anatomy. The direction she chose was toward the river. Rid of her burden, she tossed her head and screamed her rage to the brightening sky.

Men came rushing from all sides to learn what ailed Most-Sacred-Mule.

"Oh! Look at Oomy!" Lachlan cried in consternation. Poor Oomy lay flat on his back.

"Who has cast down the Turtle-god? Who has angered Most-Sacred-Mule? A curse will come on us! The terrible curse of the Turtle-god!" The warriors muttered the words, quaking with fear, as they stood before the awful spectacle of the overturned, struggling Oomy. They watched Gypsy John carefully set his beloved pet on his feet again, murmuring sympathetic phrases to him the while. Then the cry for vengeance went round. Who had been guilty of this sacrilege? Let him be killed!

"Valdez," said Lachlan. "Susanna threw him over the bank."

On the instant a score of braves leaped over the cliff and scrambled down to the water's edge. But, in the half light, they missed sight of Valdez, swimming for dear life away from the shore. They

believed that he had been drowned for his blasphemous deed. But, instead, he gained the opposite bank. Many weeks afterward a fur pirogue picked him up off the river's edge, gaunt, tattered, half-naked, and carried him safely home to New Orleans. Governor Miró received him politely, heard his story, in which Oomy was not mentioned, and threw him into prison for having failed to kill McGillivray.

Dawn came full, and sunrise, and no sign of allies nor of Powers. Toward midday a scouting party of Creeks met six Choctaw hunters a few miles from camp. From them the Creek scouts learned that Powers had not appeared in the Indian country at all. They came back on the run to tell McGillivray. The news caused immense consternation.

"It is the curse of the Turtle-god!" Tustunnuc cried, gray with fear. "We will go back!"

McGillivray's face was like a demon's, as he thrust the Great Warrior aside.

"Who was it angered the Turtle-god? A white man! How shall we lift the curse of the Turtle-god? By taking vengeance on white men! There are white men in Nashville! There are scalps in Nashville! Muskogee, will you go and take them? Or shall the White Leader go alone?"

"We will go!" They shouted in answer.

McGillivray leaped forward and the warriors followed.

"Look out for Tustunnuc," Lachlan said to Blue Arrow.

"I am watching," Blue Arrow answered.

The men of Nashville had not anticipated this raid. A number of them were out hunting; and, fortunately, a small party had gone southeastward. About four in the afternoon two of this party sighted the Creeks from a bluff. They made haste to collect all their members and then started home at top speed. Thus Nashville was ready for the onslaught some hours before it took place. As the Creeks rushed upon the fort in the first morning light, they were met with a fire that staggered them. Yet, again and again, stung by McGillivray's words, they hurled themselves at the barricades, while the crack riflemen within the fort took deadly toll. The torches which the Indians flung upon the roofs smouldered and went out; for, all night long, the women had hauled water and sopped the bark of the split logs. The Creek losses were so heavy that, in spite of White Alex's eloquence and fearless example, the red army first wavered, then broke, and withdrew pellmell into the forest.

"The curse of the Turtle-god! The curse of the Turtle-god!" they wailed. The retreat became a mad, terror-stricken rout.

In this frenzy of confusion, when men hurled blindly against one another, tripped and fell, grappled and threw one another in the effort to clear their path, Tustunnuc saw his opportunity. With him it was no longer a matter of earning gifts from the Spaniards. His lifelong jealousy of White Alex, which Valdez had vigorously fanned, had flamed into killing rage when McGillivray thrust him aside

and took his place as war leader. He had lost his tomahawk in the wild flight, but he still had his large hunting knife. Drawing it, he leaped over the backs of some tumbled Creeks, who had been thrown down in the scrimmage—one of these was Blue Arrow—and rushed at McGillivray. The White Leader did not see him coming because he was looking about anxiously for Lachlan. But the boy saw him. Lachlan was pushing a sprawling Creek aside in the dual effort to help Blue Arrow up and to recover his own rifle which had been knocked from his hand. Perhaps he rather sensed than saw his foster father's danger, as the brawny figure of the Great Warrior hurtled past him. It was too late to stop Tustunnuc. There was no time to pick up his gun, aim, and fire it. There was only one thing he could do; and he did that. He threw himself in front of McGillivray, with extended arms, to take the death-blow meant for the White Leader.

"Blue Arrow!" he shouted. He did not think Blue Arrow could get there in time to save *him,* but he hoped he could get there in time to save McGillivray from the second thrust of Tustunnuc's blade. Blue Arrow, however, had seen Tustunnuc's rush, and, by a special effort, had disentangled himself from the two squirming Creeks and gained his feet. He dashed after the war leader and leaped upon his back. The impact of his body spoiled Tustunnuc's aim. The murderous knife ripped Lachlan's sleeve open but did not even scratch his flesh. Blue Arrow dug the fingers of his left hand into Tustunnuc's

eyes. With his right hand he whipped up his knife and drove it through the bull neck of the Great Warrior just below the skull. Their two bodies, one living, the other dead, crashed down on the sod together.

Lachlan felt the arm, with which McGillivray had seized him to cast him aside out of danger, tighten like a steel spring and draw him close. Neither of them spoke. Blue Arrow extricated himself and stood erect. He looked McGillivray gravely in the eyes, lifted his hand above his head, and said, using a customary Indian phrase:

"The days appointed to Tustunnuc are ended."

The braves, who gathered beside the body of their war leader, muttered in tones of awe:

"The curse of the Turtle-god!"

Almost immediately something so terrible happened that the death of Tustunnuc became a mere trifle. Several warriors who had been in the rear of the flight dashed up.

"Look! Look!" they cried, pointing back through the gaps in the trees to the clearing before the fort. There, in plain view, was Susanna, her rope dangling, trotting straight for the gate of the fort with Oomy on her back. To understand this catastrophe, it is necessary to look back to the moment when Gypsy John saw Lachlan's peril. Lachlan had once saved Oomy's life; so John's duty now was plain. He must rescue Lachlan. John knew that Oomy expected it of him. He thrust the rope of Susanna's halter hastily into the hands of a Creek brave and ran

towards Lachlan. Susanna—already much irritated by the travel, the firing and the rushing about of these red men who were no friends of hers—kicked the Creek brave as far from her as possible and then set out for the only place that looked to her like home, a log structure such as she was familiar with elsewhere.

Even while the Creeks watched, and tears rolled down Gypsy John's cheeks, the fort gate opened for Susanna and closed behind her. At once the warriors demanded that McGillivray make a peace treaty with Nashville and recover the Turtle-god. And White Alex, knowing his Indians, realized that there was nothing else to do!

"Ye'll have to send me to the fort wi' Gypsy John and Blue Arrow," said Lachlan.

McGillivray's face darkened with suspicion. "You will never come back."

"I was willin' to be killed for ye, Alex McGillivray," the boy cried fiercely. "An' now I'm gi'in' ye my word I'll come back."

"Then go."

In a few moments Lachlan, with Blue-Arrow and Gypsy John behind him, and Barking Water racing, panting, after them, knocked at the heavy gate.

"Let me in, Jim," he cried. "'Tis Lachlan Douglas come to make peace wi' ye for Alex McGillivray."

Watching, with tortured heart, from beyond the fringe of forest, the White Leader saw the gate open once more and then close, as his son disappeared inside.

CHAPTER X

THE PEACE OF OOMY

It was Kaspar Mansker who had hauled the big gate open. He seized Lachlan in a rough embrace.

"He spoke der trudt!" he shouted. "He is Lachlan!"

"Lachlan, lad, I'm glad to see you," said James Robertson, gripping the boy's hand.

"How are ye, Jim?" Lachlan asked, beaming at him.

"Who are your friends?" Robertson asked. He shook hands with Blue Arrow.

"Oh, this is a Spanish man from a place in South America that's called Venezuela. His name's Gypsy John. An' he's a verra fine man, Jim; an' a great friend o' mine. An' yon darkey butterball is a Seminole, a wild man, ye ken. An' his name's Wewoca. It means Barkin' Water. His father was a big black man that ran off from the Spanish in Pensacola but got caught again; an' his mother was a Creek partly, coz she was related to Tustunnuc, the War Leader, that's just got killed by Blue Arrow here. Barkin' Water's a good friend o' mine, too."

After shaking hands with Gypsy John and Wewoca, Robertson presented them formally to the other defenders of the fort.

"And now, lad," he said gravely, "what's the trick in this talk of a peace treaty? For White Alex never talks peace without a trick in his mind."

"It's no trick this time, Jim. I'm not denyin' that Alex McGillivray would rather die than make peace wi' ye or any other Americans, on account o' the fearful wrong was done by some Americans to his father long since. His father was red-haired like me an' was named Lachlan; an' that's why White Alex loves me. An' I won't deny, neither, that the man's set such a spell on me my own heart's fair tied to him. I've spent hours in tryin' to make out Alex McGillivray, Jim; an' all I can make o' him is that he's a wonderfu' fine man gone mad through hatin' an' broodin' coz o' his father he loves so much."

"Why do you think he's not playing some trick this time?"

"Coz o' Oomy." He looked about hastily. In the first thrill of greeting his old friends he had momentarily forgotten the Turtle-god. There was no sign of him. Wewoca plucked his sleeve.

"Where is Mighty Turtle-god?" he whispered. "Where is Most-Sacred-Mule?"

"Oomy? What's that?" Robertson queried with a puzzled look.

"Oomy's a turtle. We saw Susanna trot in here wi' him. Susanna's a mule," Lachlan explained; "an' the Creeks think Oomy's a god. They forced Alex to make peace so as to get him back." He grinned. "Ye see, Oomy an' Susanna's Gypsy John's property an' his verra dear friends. An'

when I came back from New Orleans wi' Alex, he got the Spanish Man, Miró, that's a gov'nor down there, to give me Gypsy an' Oomy an' Susanna, coz we'd all got to be such grand friends together."

"That's a queer tale, lad," Robertson said, smiling. "But I know it's true if you tell it. When we saw a big mule with a basket on her back coming towards the fort we let her in. A mule is a valuable beast. Then we spied the turtle in the bottom of the basket and some one called out, 'There's a plate of soup for every man in Nashville!' And some of them started to take the turtle out of the basket. But they didn't get far with it. That mule is the fiercest critter on four legs I ever saw! She crippled more men inside of fifteen minutes than all the Creek braves did in four hours or more. Then she went off with your Oomy across the yard somewhere; and we let her go. None of us felt any ambition to interfere with her nor to ask her any questions."

"Ay, she would," Lachlan nodded solemnly. "Susanna's got heels like hammers an' teeth like a bear-trap. An' she's not over-friendly wi' strangers at the best o' times. But Gypsy John can manage her."

Gypsy had already started off in search of his pets. The tinkle of Susanna's bell led him speedily to a group of cabins. To the terror of the women inside, the mule was investigating to discover which cabin was Gypsy John's. For years it had been Susanna's custom to wander up from field, or bayou brink, a half dozen times a day to a cabin, just

"LET ME IN, JIM," HE CRIED. "I'LL [illegible] TO MAKE PEACE WI' YE FOR

like these, where she had always found Gypsy John. She was inquiring for John now when she thrust her enormous head and ungainly shoulders into the Nashville cabins, one after another, and scared the occupants half to death. They screamed at her and threw things at her, and she withdrew, with her back humped and her heavy lips drawn away from her huge teeth in a snarl that even a crocodile might envy. Sometimes as she swung round, she gave the cabin door—that was instantly banged to and bolted behind her—a kick that splintered it. She had just picked up a pail outside one doorway and sent it hurtling through a window opposite, when her master and bosom friend came up with her. He spoke to her soothingly. She stared at him suspiciously out of sullen angry eyes for a few moments. Then her very long ears, which had been lying almost flat on the back of her neck, gradually rose again to their normal position, saluting the sky. Her spine straightened in a series of spasmodic quivers, her tail drooped, her teeth receded, and she emitted a gentle, almost plaintive, "hee-haw," ending, as she nosed into his shoulder, in a little whinny of contentment. Gypsy rubbed her nose and fondled her ears for a minute, and then looked into the basket. He could see only a big round shell. Oomy was asleep under his hat. But then Oomy so seldom allowed any commotion that went on around him to disturb him. He was not of a nervous temperament.

He was awake, however, when John once again

joined the group near the gate—with Susanna's head hanging over his shoulder and her heavy front hoofs just an inch or two behind his heels. Assisted by Lachlan and Wewoca, Gypsy John lifted Oomy out of the basket and set him on the ground to be observed and marveled at by the assembled warriors of Nashville.

"Oomy, ye've had a grand history. If ye could only write a book about it!" Lachlan said, laughingly. "First ye were but a turtle in a swamp o' Venezuela. Next ye were a citizen o' Louisiana wi' a private secretary. An' then ye were a god in Georgia an' Alabama. An' now to-day ye nearly became a soup. I never knew a man that had had adventures to match ye!"

During the roar of laughter that followed this remark, Oomy gently scratched Susanna's leg with his beak and then ambled off to a spot near by where the castaway thighbone of a boiled deer was attracting the flies.

"One thing I like so much about Oomy," Gypsy John said, "he all time keep so calm. Now, me, I am *veree* excite. Susanna, also, she *veree* excite—more so as me. But Oomy, no."

"Ye see, Jim," Lachlan said, "the Creeks have to get Oomy back coz they've made a god o' him. An' that's why White Alex sent me to make peace. If ye'll write a treaty on paper, Jim, I'll take it to Alex an' he'll sign it. An' then I'll bring it back to ye."

"And we'll keep you safe with us," said Robert-

son. "Your father's on the way now from Sevier's place. He's been grieving for you."

The boy's face clouded. "I'm wantin' to see Ross Douglas again, terrible bad, Jim. But I can't stay here. I gave my word to White Alex that I'd go back to him. An' my word's my word. He's trustin' me."

There was a storm of protest from the Nashville men at this idea. Some of them said that no man need keep a promise made to a red-handed fiend and an outlaw like McGillivray. Others tried to impress on the boy that he was in continual danger of his life in the Creek country; and that a treacherous devil like White Alex might turn on him at any minute.

"Maybe all ye say is true," Lachlan answered gravely, "but I have to do the thing that seems right to mysel'. I never yet broke my word to a man; nor did Ross Douglas. We're no liars, Ross an' me. An' I couldn't do any bad thing to the White Leader. For I've loved the man from the first look at him; though I'm not denyin' he's a dangerous one. But I've no fear o' him for mysel'. An' I've a hope in me yet, that I'll save him from his madness an' make him stop from warrin'. Ye'll have to let me go back, Jim. I've got to go."

Robertson regarded Lachlan with a very serious expression for a short while before he replied, "You know, lad, I'm never one to tell any man to break his word. I am sorry that matters stand as they

do. But I won't say anything more to influence you."

"Wait till Ross gets here," said another man. "He'll have something to say about this!"

"He'll never tell me to break my word," said Lachlan.

The shadows of evening were beginning to smudge out the last colors of sunset when Lachlan, with the inevitable Barking Water at his heels, set out for the Creek camp in the woods, with the treaty. At his suggestion Robertson had written in these words:

"A peace forever is between the Four Nations of the Creeks and the White Men of Nashville and their friends, the White Men in eastern Tennessee; because Oomy, the mighty Turtle-god of the Creek Nations, has led the Creek warriors to Nashville in order to make this peace forever; while grasses grow and rivers flow and sun and moon endure." This last phrase was a common one employed in many treaties with the Indians, and had been learned from them by the white men.

As McGillivray read it the bitter gloom of his face was briefly lightened, if one could call it that, by a sardonic smile.

"The mighty Turtle-god!" he repeated softly. "Mister god-Oomy, has ruined my campaign and robbed me of my vengeance. If Miró had dished him up with mushrooms a year ago, he would have saved me a bitter disappointment."

The warriors crowded around to watch the

White Leader affix his signature to the two copies of the important document. Then six of them, representing six large towns, made their marks on the paper and McGillivray wrote their names opposite the marks. Where one man, for instance, drew crudely a bear in action, McGillivray wrote the name, which was Running Bear. The braves had already elected Running Bear as war leader in the place of the slain Tustunnuc.

"Is the Turtle-god no longer angry?" they asked Lachlan.

"He is no longer angry. He has found flies and is contented," Wewoca answered before Lachlan could speak.

"And how is Most-Sacred-Mule?"

"At first Most-Sacred-Mule felt no friendship for the white men. She kicked them, even as she has kicked Creeks. But Gylipee Jaw immediately made her also very contented."

"H'm. H'm," they nodded. "Gylipee Jaw is a most powerful Medicine Priest. He is better even than our Rain-Maker, old Netocho."

"We will not return for several days, but will remain in the fort with the white men. Because Most-Sacred-Mule has found there a small house which is made for holy animals. It has hay in it. She will stay there till she has eaten much and slept much. Then she will take the Turtle-god in the basket and return with us to our towns. So she has said to Gylipee Jaw."

This was Barking Water's way of telling the

braves that Gypsy John had put Susanna in a stall in Robertson's stable and had asserted most positively that he would not take her on trail again until she had thoroughly recovered from her fatigue and, consequently, had attained a sweeter state of temper.

"How long will that be?" McGillivray asked.

"John said, about a week," Lachlan answered. The gloom deepened on White Alex's face.

"You know we cannot wait here a week," he said. "We have no food. And we cannot hunt in this neighborhood because, if our hunters and the Nashville hunters meet in the forest, they will kill one another."

Lachlan nodded. "Ye'll have to go back wi'out me, White Alex. But ye know I'll come after ye, because I've promised ye."

For some moments McGillivray was silent, his face dark with doubt and pain. Then he said, "One week before you leave, and a week perhaps on trail. It will seem a long time to me before I see you again."

"But ye *will* see me again, White Alex!" Their hands clasped once, firmly. Then Lachlan and Barking Water hastened back to the fort. An hour later, the rising moon saw McGillivray and his Creeks on the homeward march.

While Lachlan and Barking Water were with the Creeks, the men of Nashville, inspired by Kaspar Mansker, discussed the advisability of holding the boy where he belonged, among his own people.

They said that it was honest and courageous of Lachlan to be so determined to keep his word at all costs; but that no question of honor was involved in dealing with McGillivray, who never kept a promise made to a white man. Alex, they said, had made peace before and then broken his pact as soon as he saw a good opportunity. No, there could be no question of fair dealing with Alexander McGillivray. Then, too, there was always the danger to the boy himself. A fiend like White Alex might turn on him and kill him at any minute for no reason at all.

"Boys," said Robertson, "I believe with you that it is madness for the lad to go back to that bloody devil, McGillivray. But, if you prevent him, you'll have Alex and his Creeks to deal with. They'll come down on us again."

"They'll come anyway," a man answered. "You know McGillivray won't keep the peace, no matter what he promises!"

Robertson nodded.

"I'll take no part in it," he said, "but I won't stop you from keeping Lachlan if you can do it."

"If!" Mansker echoed. "Of course ve can do idt! Lachlan's a smardt poy, but ropes can tie him yust der same like stupid fellers!"

"It's the ruin of any boy to live with Indians," another man remarked. "There's no good in any redskin that I ever saw. You can't trust one of them. Some of you think Blue Arrow's all right. I don't. Why? Because he's an Indian. That's

why. And it's a good enough reason for any frontiersman."

There was general agreement with this sentiment. To the men of the frontier, with few exceptions, the only good Indian was a dead Indian. Convinced, as the Nashville men were, that McGillivray had no intention of keeping the peace, and, hating him and all Creeks with abundant reason, they felt that they were doing the right thing in planning to prevent Lachlan from returning to White Alex by any means of trickery or force that might be necessary.

When Lachlan came back, Blue Arrow drew him aside. "I think these men will not let you return with us and with the Turtle-god. I have heard them talking. I could not understand much that they said, but I am sure they mean to keep you here."

"Oh, no;" Lachlan answered, "because I have told them why I must return to White Alex. If they try to prevent me I will tell them again."

Blue Arrow regarded him seriously. "I have watched their faces and listened to their voices. I think they will not ask you any more; but they will keep you."

"I see," Lachlan answered. He frowned thoughtfully. It seemed that he was in a difficult situation. Still, he readily promised himself to get out of it! Presently, he was seated at Robertson's table with Jim and old Kaspar, filling their ears with his startling reports of General James Wilkinson and his agents, Nolan and Powers. So outrageous did his

story seem, that they thought he must have made some absurd mistake, if indeed he had not dreamed the whole thing! He did not understand Spanish or French, they reminded him; so that he could easily have been mistaken as to what Wilkinson, Miró and McGillivray were talking about. And, as to what McGillivray himself had told him—well, was there a decent white man in Tennessee who would take Alexander McGillivray's word about anything?

"Ye don't understand White Alex," the boy asserted and re-asserted stubbornly. "He's lied to ye because he hates ye. But he's told me the truth coz he loves me. An', if there's no truth in it, why was Powers tryin' to kill me that night? Alex confessed to me that Miró an' Number Thirteen—that's Wilkinson—was tryin' to get him to consent to it; for, they said, I'd run away to Nashville an' tell all their secrets. They was scared to death, Jim, for fear I'd tell ye just what I *am* tellin' ye!"

"Dere's poindts aboudt dis beesness, Jim," said Kaspar, "dot looks badt for Vilkinsohn. He could be friendts mit Miró all right if der President sendt him dere on some special beesness. But for vy is he friendts mit Alex McGillivray? Und here's anoder t'ing. Ain't ve been sayin' dot Alex vos mixed up mit Miró und got all his powder from der Spanish Man? If dis tale of Lachlan's is all nonsense, vy vos dose dree togedder in New Orleans? Dot looks badt! Vilkinsohn could be dere on a mission

to talk mit der Spanish Man: but vy vos Alex McGillivray dere too?"

"An' why did Number Thirteen set Powers on to kill me?" Lachlan persisted.

"I admit that this matter of Powers is hard to explain," Robertson said. "But it is harder for me to believe that General Wilkinson has a number—thirteen, you say?—on the list of Spanish agents and is taking pay to betray his own country. But I'll write to John Sevier about it and tell him all you say, Lachlan. And I'll suggest to him that he write to Isaac Shelby in Kentucky. Shelby may be able to find out if there is anything queer about Wilkinson's activities in Kentucky. They will have to go about it very carefully; and we ourselves must not talk about this thing to the other men. It is too serious. Such charges can't be made lightly against a man in General Wilkinson's position. Certainly not on the word of a scoundrel like Alexander McGillivray." And with that Lachlan had to be content.

CHAPTER XI

OLD ONE-EYE'S GOLD

THE stamp of hoofs and the noise of greetings in the courtyard sent Robertson, Mansker and Lachlan running outdoors. Under the torches, which were quickly brought, a group of travelers took shape, their figures etched partly in blackness and partly in red glare; with silver touches of the moon playing through the shadow, here on a white horse's mane, there more dimly on a rifle barrel. Ross Douglas led the party. He was accompanied by a young man, his nephew, named Andy MacPhail, a famous scout of eastern Tennessee, more often called Silent Scot, and by Andy's best friend Tuleko, a Delaware Indian, who was better known in old Watauga as Runner-on-the-Wind. There were also two boys who were Silent Scot's youngest brothers: the notable MacPhail twins, Rob and Roy, whom John Sevier had nicknamed the Scalpin' Scots when they were four years old, because they were naturally such fighters. They were sturdy manly lads with fiery red hair, aggressive chins and warlike blue-gray eyes. A couple of men of Ross' own age, experienced pack-train men who had spent their lives in the Indian trade, were also of the

party which Ross had led to Nashville with a consignment of powder for the defence of Middle Tennessee. At first Lachlan had no eyes for his cousins. He and Ross had too much to say to each other. He related his adventures at such a pace that his father protested, saying, "My ears canna work at the speed o' yer tongue!" But at last he had found some one who did believe his story. Ross knew his son thoroughly. He knew that Lachlan was of a serious and practical turn of mind, not at all prone to colorful imaginings. He might be mistaken, of course, as any careful man might be. But Ross thought he wasn't.

"Ye don't speak Spanish, as Jim says. An' so ye couldn't get hold o' the words o' it all," he mused. "When first I went tradin' wi' the Chickasaw, I didna know a word o' what they said to one another. But there's other ways o' tellin' what's goin' on in their minds when they're talkin'. A man's got eyes an' brains as much as ears. I'll tell John Sevier what I think; an' Jim, too."

"An' ye see, Ross, that I've got to go back to Alex, don't ye?"

Ross sighed heavily. "Ay, ye've got to go. Ye've given yer word. An' we must think o' others an' not tempt White Alex wi' a broken promise to set his Creeks loose again to massacre every settlement they can reach, an' murder every party o' white hunters out i' the woods an' a' the traders on the trail."

Later they held another family conference on the

subject, with the three MacPhail cousins assisting. Andy said it was a pity they had no money or they might buy Lachlan's freedom; since McGillivray was said to love money more than anything in the world. The twins turned sharply and looked at each other.

"Old Tom's gold!" they exclaimed together.

"What's that?" Lachlan asked. They proceeded to tell him of the sack of gold which an ex-pirate named Tom Shark, or One-eyed Shark, had hidden in his dug-out in the mountains behind Watauga; and how a bad man called Jimmy Breed had stolen it and run away to the Chickamaugans with it; and how Tuleko had seen the Chickamaugan chief, Dragging Canoe, steal off in the dark to bury it. They said that they had started out on two hunts for its hiding place; but had been forced to turn back. They would surely have found it before now, if the Indians had not been on the warpath so much these last few years. It had not been safe to go out looking for gold!

"We'll go an' dig up Old Tom's gold, Roy," said Rob, "an' buy Lachlan from the White Leader!"

"Ay, we'll go to-morrer," said Roy. It was settled. When Rob Roy said they were going to do something, they did it! Lachlan did not think that McGillivray would surrender him for money; but he did not say so. There was something between him and White Alex which no one else, none but those two, could understand. It was of no use to try to explain it to other people. The twins' plan,

however, offered him the very opportunity he needed; which was to slip out of the hands of the Nashville men and keep his word to McGillivray.

"I'll go wi' ye," he said. "An' fetch the gold back here an' get Blue Arrow an' Oomy an' the others an' go on down to the Creeks." So it was decided that, the next night, he would make the trip with Ross and the MacPhails and Tuleko. They would spend three days searching the limited space on the rim of the ravine, where Tuleko had seen Dragging Canoe disappear with the gold, then they would return, with it or without it. They thought, with it. Lachlan whispered to Blue Arrow later that night as they rolled in their blankets:

"On the seventh day you and Gypsy John and Barking Water start for White Alex's town. You tell Jim that you can't wait any longer for me, because the Creeks will be angry if their Turtle-god does not come home and will start to war again, thinking the white men have broken faith with them. They will let you go; because they will think it much easier to keep *me* if you are already gone when I return. But I will meet you on the trail. I will not come back here at all."

"That is a good plan;" Blue Arrow agreed, "but it is dangerous for you to be on the trail alone perhaps for several days before we meet."

"That can't be helped," said Lachlan, and went to sleep.

The next night, he was on the march with the pack train, his cousins, Tuleko and Ross Douglas.

Ross was carrying a letter from James Robertson to John Sevier embodying certain "curious rumors" about General James Wilkinson.

A few evenings later a lone white hunter came into Nashville. He said his name was Tom Flynn, that he had started in a boat down the Ohio with a companion and a pack of goods for trade with the Indians, that the boat had capsized near the mouth of the Cumberland and that his goods had been lost and his partner drowned. He had managed to save his rifle, he said, and had made his way on foot along the bank of the Cumberland to Nashville. He was telling his hard-luck story to Robertson in the yard of the fort when Barking Water crossed it, behind him, with a pail of water for Susanna. Wewoca almost dropped the pail. His eyes rolled and his mouth opened. He hastened into the stable where Gypsy John and Blue Arrow were sitting, idly watching Most-Sacred-Mule as she munched in her stall and tossed the flies from her tail to the Turtle-god. Lachlan's dog, Rusty, lay asleep near the door.

"Look!" he panted. "See who has come!" He was speaking in Creek to Blue Arrow. "But do not show yourself!" Blue Arrow, followed by Gypsy John, slipped out and peered round the corner of the stable. John did not fully understand what Wewoca said, but he sensed the need for stealth. Both of them also recognized the newcomer at once. They knew Philip Nolan quite well! They crept back into the stable and held a conference.

After Nolan had started from New Orleans for Pensacola, Wilkinson had learned that Spain had decided to concede to America the right of navigation on the Mississippi. Her troubles in Europe, where the French Revolution had robbed her of her royal ally, and in South America, were increasing, and she could not keep on with her large and intricate plots in the United States. This change of policy would affect Wilkinson very directly—chiefly through his purse. He had despatched a boat after Nolan with orders to return to New Orleans. Nolan had arrived a week or more after McGillivray and Lachlan had left. Then he and Wilkinson had started up the Mississippi. On the bank, one morning, as they breakfasted, they had been visited by the same party of Choctaw hunters which McGillivray's Creek scouts had met in the war march on Nashville. From these hunters, of course, Wilkinson had learned that Powers had not appeared in their country with the ammunition; also that there had been no great war alliance of their tribe with the Creeks, and that McGillivray had proceeded to attack Nashville with only his own warriors. What had become of Powers? Had Lachlan escaped from the war party and got safely into Nashville to tell tales of Wilkinson? Here were mighty schemes gone hopelessly awry! And that was why Nolan was in Nashville—to find out whatever he could.

The Nashville men were ready enough to tell all their news to this agreeable stranger. They had no

reason to suspect him. While they fed him, they informed him of the recent Creek rail. They told him, amid wild guffaws, all about the Turtle-god's treaty; and about Lachlan Douglas, who had just gone to old Watauga with his father's pack train but would return soon to Nashville. As Robertson and Kaspar Mansker were the only men who had heard Lachlan speak of Wilkinson, that name was not mentioned. Nolan, professing interest in the story of the boy who had lived among the Creeks, craftily asked such questions as must surely have brought out Wilkinson's name if the boy had told them that he had seen Number Thirteen in New Orleans. He was convinced presently that Lachlan had not told. Why? That bothered him for a while. It was not like a boy to keep that stupendous fact hidden!

After some pondering Nolan believed that he had reasoned it out correctly. An older head at work; that was why. The boy had probably told only his father, at first. His father was going to eastern Tennessee where John Sevier was Governor of the State of Franklin. Sevier was a very old friend of Shelby's; and Sevier would send the information about Wilkinson to Shelby in Number Thirteen's own home territory, Kentucky. Nashville could do nothing to embarrass Wilkinson, but Sevier and Shelby could do a great deal! Yes, he mused, that was undoubtedly the way of it. The boy's father, Ross Douglas, had seen that the wiser thing was to say nothing in Nashville, but to go straight to

John Sevier with it. Well, in that case, Philip Nolan's work was clear before him. He had to overtake that caravan and kill Lachlan Douglas; so that Lachlan would never tell his story to John Sevier. He would do away with both Douglases if he could; but, if Ross escaped, after all, he could only say that his son had told him this or that. But the boy could describe Miró, his garden and house, tell exactly what Wilkinson looked like, imitate his walk and his manner of speech, and, by a score of such details, convince Sevier that his story was true. Sevier might even send Lachlan to Shelby. In the end, the boy might face Wilkinson in Shelby's presence in Louisville, denounce him, and inspire an investigation which could result in ruin, absolute ruin, for Philip Nolan as well as for James Wilkinson.

While these unpleasant conjectures were occupying the bogus Mr. Tom Flynn, the dangers of Lachlan Douglas were being considered from another angle by the group of three in the stable. The upshot of their conference was that Wewoca would speed after the pack train and tell Lachlan of Nolan's arrival. Lachlan would know what to do. Blue Arrow could not go; because he must guide Gypsy John, Oomy and Susanna back to the Creek towns. It was a long journey to the Creek country and Wewoca might get lost if he attempted it; since he had never been over the trail before the recent raid. The trading trail to Watauga, on the contrary, was well marked, and he would also have the

recent traces of the MacPhail caravan to guide him; the charred camp fires, fresh hoof marks, and so on.

Before Nolan had been in Nashville two hours, Wewoca was on his way. Nobody saw him go. He slid along the roofs of cabins to the edge of the palisade, rolled over the back wall and sprinted off through the forest. The next day Nolan also set out for Watauga, well supplied with ammunition which had been generously given him by the men of Nashville.

Now, the truth is that Barking Water was not cast in heroic mold. Barking Water had had very little scouting experience; and, furthermore, he was afraid of the dark, of being alone, and of ghosts both by day and night. It was not courage but devotion to his friend, Laklan Chate, which sent him forth to risk, as he believed, all the perils of Nature, of man, beasts, fishes, birds, and disembodied spirits.

"If I meet a ghost, how shall I act towards it?" he mused. "Shall I treat it very scornfully; or shall I speak to it with great politeness? Laklan Chate is always polite and men think well of him for it. I wish I had asked him if he always speaks with the same politeness to spirits. Perhaps the ghost will run from me in fear; because my face is so nearly black and therefore not like other faces which it has seen on this trail. Yes, no doubt! How fortunate it is for me that I so greatly resemble my black fierce father!" He dashed ahead with renewed confidence.

Meanwhile the pack train had pitched camp on the brow of the ravine where Dragging Canoe had hidden the gold. Once again Runner-on-the-Wind climbed the tree from which he had watched Dragging Canoe scale the opposite cliff that night. His sharp eyes recognized the very spot where the chief had disappeared. He descended and led the other men across the ravine and over the rim at the place which he had marked from his tree. Then he began to hunt for some sign which Dragging Canoe must have left to indicate the buried gold. It had been dark when he buried it; therefore he would leave something—a cleft in a tree trunk, a stone lying at a certain angle to the place—something to show it to him when he returned in the daylight, so that the presence of trees, mounds, bushes, which he had not seen in the dark, could not utterly confuse him. And because it had been night-time, the sign would be very close to the buried treasure. So Tuleko said; and Silent Scot agreed with him. The twins heard but said nothing; they were already hunting. It was they who had found the gold the first time when it was hidden in Jimmy Breed's cabin; they expected to find it now. And they did. Together they came on two stones, a large one and a smaller one, lying end to end. They felt sure that these stones had been deliberately placed in that position. Two feet away, a tree grew, with young brush hiding its lower trunk.

"Rob, yon brush wasna born when he hided the gold!"

"Roy, ye're right!"

In a trice they were tearing the young growth up by the roots. Andy, Tuleko, and Lachlan helped them, while the older men looked on interestedly. Presently Lachlan's knife struck metal. A few moments later the pirate hoard of Old Adm'r'l Shark lay uncovered to their view. The twins rose, looked each other proudly in the eyes, and shook hands.

"Well done, Rob!" said Roy.

"The same to ye, Roy!" said Rob.

The best plan, Andy thought, was to take the gold to Sevier. Sevier would count it and bank it, and then write to McGillivray offering it as a ransom for Lachlan. Ross agreed to this. After a good meal, by way of celebration, Ross and Lachlan said farewell. It was not an easy parting for father and son; but they were both convinced that Lachlan must keep his word to McGillivray, not only for his own honor's sake, but for the sake of all the white settlers within reach of Creek tomahawks.

Some days later, as dawn broke, Lachlan looked down from the rocks upon the spot where he had first met Alexander McGillivray. He clambered down swiftly, possessed by the strange fancy that he would eat breakfast, on this morning of his homeward march to Alex, at the foot of the same tree where Alex had once lighted the fires to burn him. He was looking about him, lazily, after a hearty meal, and thinking that the many earth holes and rock crevices in the high irregular cliff would make good ambushes in time of war, when a bullet hit a

tree about five yards to the left of him. He plunged into a clump of brush and squatted there with his rifle ready. The shot had come from somewhere on the cliff. He could not make out the exact spot. He crouched still, listening. Who had fired at him, and why?

"Whoever he is, he's a terrible poor shot to miss me at less than a hundred yards!" he thought cheerfully.

It would have surprised him not a little if he had known that the bullet had come from the rifle of his devoted friend, Barking Water.

Two hours earlier Wewoca, on taking the trail after a brief sleep, had sighted Nolan on the crest of another hill behind him. Since he could not dip over the brow of his own hill without being seen, he went into hiding and let Nolan pass him. Then, shaking in every limb, he crept after him. For a time, because of the jutting rocks and the twists in the trail, he lost sight of him. Suddenly looking down, he saw him, as he thought, sitting under a tree by the creek. He fired; and, as Lachlan had said, it was lucky for him that Wewoca was "a terrible poor shot."

Barking Water, carefully screened by a mound, was watching the clump of brush where Lachlan had disappeared, when he heard a sound near by, directly below him. There, to his amazement, was Nolan, not forty feet distant, working his way along the face of the cliff. Barking Water, in terror, immediately blazed away again. At that range

it was almost impossible, even for him, not to hit the target; and so he did. The bullet gouged the calf of Nolan's leg. A second bullet, aimed at Nolan's head, struck the butt of his rifle and jerked the gun out of his hand; it tumbled down the cliff. Then Nolan himself disappeared. It took Wewoca some minutes to reason out the cause of this magic phenomenon. Then he realized that Nolan had crawled into one of the miniature caves that honeycombed the cliff. Wewoca crept out as far as he dared over the edge of his own hummock and stared down at the lower hummock that now housed Philip Nolan. Then he began to descend. Nolan was not dead and Nolan had a good hunting knife; still, Wewoca thought that these facts should not deter a brave and fierce Seminole warrior, even if they did make his knees shake. He guessed now that the man by the tree had been Lachlan. Who else? Nolan had been creeping along the cliff to get a shot at Lachlan! Of course! But who could have reasoned this out, except himself?

"I am very intelligent," Wewoca said between chattering teeth. He went on down until he could crawl on to the top of Nolan's hiding place. He peered over the edge. The hole was far back, evidently; he could not see it. While he cogitated as to what was the most courageous thing to do now, and what the most sensible for a man careful of his safety, Nature herself—who must have waited years for this golden opportunity—took a hand.

The next thing Barking Water knew he was hurtling head first towards the creek. The mass of earth and stones, on which his well-fed form had rested, had been but an undermined ledge projecting far beyond the hole into which Nolan had crawled. Under Barking Water's weight it had given way, sending him catapulting down hill and filling up the entrance of Nolan's retreat so that the captive was left with only an air hole or two for breathing. Nolan would get out eventually, but it would take him some time to cut an exit with his knife.

The fall landed Wewoca on soft earth, dazed, somewhat bruised but otherwise undamaged. Presently he got up, found his rifle, and, after one long satisfactory survey of Nolan's prison, trotted off to look for Lachlan. Lachlan, who had witnessed the final act of the drama, came to meet him, fairly shouting with laughter.

"Did you ever see a thing done more cleverly?" Wecoca panted, beaming with pride. "I could not have improved on it even had I really planned it. How fortunate for you that my gun missed you! That was because I really aimed at Nolan, thinking you were he. If Nolan had been sitting in your place he would have been hit and undoubtedly killed: because such was my intention." Lachlan was unable to answer this because it sent him off into another roar of laughter.

The boys hurried across the stream and along the trail that led to the Creek country. They traveled by daylight and by moonlight, stopping only in

the darkest hours to eat and sleep, until they had made pursuit impossible. One evening they decided to camp where they were, on a brookside, until the next morning. They were too tired to cook; so, as they had already eaten one good meal that day, they flung themselves down and slept like logs till daylight. As they woke they heard a familiar sound, the tinkle of a bell. They sat up and looked across the creek at Susanna, nose deep in the water, at Gypsy John and Blue Arrow cooking a savory breakfast over a little fire. They saw Oomy slowly waddling down to join Susanna, and to gather in the morning crop of insects which rose from the dewy grasses and swarmed about him with a fatal boldness.

Lachlan and Barking Water sprang up, shouting hungry greetings, and dashed through the shallows to the opposite shore.

CHAPTER XII

LACHLAN LEARNS THE CAUSE OF WHITE ALEX'S HATE

On a pleasant morning early in the winter, Lachlan and his friends with Oomy and Susanna entered McGillivray's town. Lachlan left the others and raced excitedly into the house. The White Leader turned sharply from his desk, spread with commercial papers, as he heard the running footsteps.

"White Alex! I've come back!" the boy shouted and literally threw himself upon the chief. For once, both McGillivray's Indian stoicism and his Scotch reserve gave way completely. He seized Lachlan in his arms and his extraordinary eyes, with their half-mad intensity, were misted.

"Laklan Chate!"

Presently he called for food which Zambo, his colored butler, brought on a silver tray. He sat beside Lachlan, watching him with silent pleasure as the boy appeased his healthy appetite.

"Now for your adventures," he said. "And, this time, do not omit anything."

"This time?" Lachlan queried over the edge of his cup. What had Alex found out, he wondered.

"Yes. I have been thinking about the curious

matter of Powers, who, so you told me, went away in that boat which I saw disappearing along the bayou. I remember, too late, that I did not make inquiries on the water-front as to whether Powers had hired a pirogue and crew and gone up the river. Laklan Chate, did anything happen to Powers that night?"

Lachlan set his cup down. His face was grave, his eyes sparkled with the keen light which danger always shed on them. He pushed the dishes aside and leaned forward with his arms across the table. There was no avoiding the issue now; he saw that clearly. He had to take the risk of a straight answer. Would the fact that he had kept his word and left the security of Nashville and his own people to return to White Alex be enough to save him here? One could never be sure what White Alex would do!

"I'll tell ye," he said; "I'll tell ye, no matter how ye answer what I'm goin' to ask ye. But first, tell me this, Alexander McGillivray; if ye had yer choice, *would it be Powers' body or mine* ye'd want should be carried away in yon boat?"

McGillivray's eyes flashed with understanding: his face set in sombre lines. For a moment he stared at the boy as if, by his silence, to compel him to say more. Lachlan felt little shivers run along his hair roots, while he waited determinedly for Alex's answer.

"You are afraid of me," Alex said presently; "but you are more afraid of being a coward."

"Ye haven't answered!"

"Must you win *all* the games played by the two wise owls?" McGillivray closed his hands hard on the boy's wrists. "Yes; I would rather it should be Powers' body. Well?"

"Then ye have yer wish. It *was* Powers' body."

"Why did you kill him?"

"It was him or me," Lachlan answered. He did not want to tell about Blue Arrow's part in the drama, fearing that McGillivray might avenge the wreckage of his plans on the young Creek. He went on to describe Powers' attack on him, which, he said, had evidently been ordered by Wilkinson.

"The boatmen came lookin' for a dead man by some one's orders, White Alex; for they picked up the body an' took it off wi' them. A body was what they came for."

"I'm rather sorry that they didn't find Wilkinson's or Miró's." The White Leader's tone was one of cold anger. All his pride as a chief was roused in bitter resentment, because his white allies had dared to attempt his adopted son's life against his express commands. Not only his pride as a chief, but the tremendous vanity of the man who had been befooled to regard himself as an emperor, was outraged by this evidence of contempt.

"Ye see, Alex, Number Thirteen was scared I'd run off to Nashville an' tell all I knew about him."

McGillivray looked at him searchingly.

"You have been in Nashville. Did you tell James Robertson?"

Lachlan did not hesitate; the time for careful planning of answers was past. "About Wilkinson? Ay; surely I told! I wouldn't be a wise young owl if I didn't try to get back at him!" He fairly flung the words out with a desperate lightness of tone.

McGillivray laughed. It was a short, ironic laugh without humor.

"Are you mad at me for it?" Lachlan demanded, his muscles tensing.

"I? No. Why should *I* care? You may have started some trouble for Wilkinson. But he can't make any for me." Lachlan regarded him in surprise for a moment; then he saw Alex's point.

"That's true," he said thoughtfully. "Ye're not an American soldier like him, playin' traitor. Ye're a Creek an' the enemy o' Americans already. He can't add to that." His tone was one of undisguised relief. Here was no peril, after all.

"Precisely. What else has happened that you have not told me?"

Lachlan grinned.

"Weel, there's a bonnie tale about a feckless chiel that's ca'ed Nolan," he said, purposely lapsing into the thickest Scotch dialect he knew. McGillivray's dark face lightened with the ghost of a smile. He asked on what bayou poor Nolan's corpse was floating.

" 'Tisn't floatin', Alex. 'Tis buried alive i' a dirt hole." He chuckled. "Barkin' Water did it. An' he did it head first!" Lachlan burst into a roar of

laughter as he recalled the scene. Controlling his mirth, after a fashion, but with frequent giggles, he related the story of Nolan and Wewoca. Under this spell of the boy's infectious humor, McGillivray's face softened. Lachlan said nothing about the gold. He felt that merely by mentioning his cousins' idea of buying his freedom, he would bitterly offend McGillivray.

They were interrupted presently by Gypsy John who came seeking Lachlan in a very disturbed state of mind. The Creeks, John said, were determined to hold a grand ceremonial in honor of the Turtle-god's return; with a triumphal and semi-religious processional through all the Creek towns. The affair would require about six weeks of time, if not more, what with dances and feasts and games and solemn marches; and, John protested indignantly, Susanna would be furious. He had led her home from Nashville by slow and easy stages, and a great deal of coaxing; but she had been very cross about it. The second day out, in fact, she had balked in one spot for a whole afternoon, and her heehawings had been terrible to hear. Lachlan must come out, John pleaded, and make the Creeks understand that Susanna simply refused to march in any religious processional. Susanna's firm intention was to cover no more ground for the rest of her life than the short stretch between the creek and the hay in her shed.

"What d'ye think I'd best do?" Lachlan asked, turning to McGillivray, with twinkling eyes.

"I think you should gather some of the leaders together and tell them that the Turtle-god has decreed a time of meditation for himself and Susanna; and that he orders all the warriors out to the hunting grounds. They have been afraid to go out after deer, thinking that Oomy's curse would follow them and destroy them. And, if they don't go, we shall be short of meat. Certainly, we will be eating hides by spring, if they inaugurate a religious feast now!"

Lachlan grinned appreciatively, and went off with Gypsy John. The White Leader stood in the doorway looking after them. His face was shadowed with the pain and the perplexity of the conflict which the boy had brought upon him. Dedicated by a vow to the most ruthless of all masters, hate and vengeance, he had shaped himself to be like these and had ordered for himself a scheme of life in which only these passions should exist. Then this boy, wearing the name of Lachlan, had come to him; to give him companionship as a white man; reminding him constantly how much less Creek than Scotch blood flowed in his veins; holding before him daily, in spontaneous and unconscious ways, the best white men's ideals of truth and square dealing, of courage tempered by mercy as well as by caution; rousing in him a love which threatened to undermine hate and vengeance, even to topple them down from their dominant place in his life. He had experienced a hard shock that morning as Lachlan told him about Powers; the shock of discover-

ing that the ruin of his plan through Powers' death meant far less to him than the life of this boy.

"I am becoming weak," he muttered. He went back to the sheaf of papers on his desk. Those papers were accounts which had been carefully kept, ever since Lachlan McGillivray, Alex's father, had disappeared. They were labelled, "The Government and People of the United States in debt to Lachlan and Alexander McGillivray." Each year interest was added and the sum grew.

One day, two months later, Alex called Lachlan into his study and asked him to read the heading over those columns of figures. The boy looked up at McGillivray curiously. "The Government and People in debt to— What does it mean, White Alex?"

"Just what it says. But you can't understand, till I have explained. There are two pictures on the wall. Look first at that crude colored drawing of a red-haired man——"

"Ay; 'tis yer father, as ye've told me."

"Yes. Look at that sketch of the trading house at Augusta and the date I've marked on it—1760, at the height of the French and Indian War, the Seven Years' War. And now look at this finely painted miniature o' myself when I was a year or two older than you."

"Ay. 'Tis yersel', done marvelous in paint, White Alex. I could never mistake yer eyes. Before ever ye'd told me, the first day I saw it, I knew the eyes o' it."

"It, too, was painted in 1760, while I was in

France visiting my kinsman, the Marquis de Marchand, the uncle of that fool in New Orleans," he added with bitter contempt. "My father was very successful, he was wealthy. He had a son with brains, a son whose appearance did not even suggest the eighth part of Indian blood in his veins; so he sent that son to Scotland to be educated. I spent some time also with my mother's relatives in Paris. She was the daughter of a Captain Marchand. During the war I became afraid for my father in Georgia. So I came back—in 1760. My father heard that the Creeks had gone over to the French and were about to fall on the Back Country Settlements in Georgia. He hastened from Charleston to his trading post in Augusta. It was a very dangerous thing to do. I went with him in spite of all his commands and his efforts to prevent me. He invited the Creek chiefs and leading warriors, two hundred of them, to the trading house; and with food and gifts, he tried to turn them from their purpose. At last the warriors said: 'It is true that you have lived many years with us and that you have married a Creek woman. But you have sent her son, our kinsman, away to be a white man. We will make peace with your people and be your brothers and have nothing more to do with the French, provided that you send your son home with us to become a Creek warrior and chief and nevermore to be a white man but a Creek. If not, we will kill all the Georgians and continue to be allies of the French.' "

Lachlan did not speak. He was breathless, watching the chief's face and the gloomy fire of his eyes.

"And, so, to save the settlers in Georgia, Lachlan McGillivray gave up his son, the one thing in life that he loved. I came here to be no more a white man, but a savage. For sixteen years I taught my Creeks peace and friendship with the Americans. Then came the American Revolution. My father was loyal to Great Britain. He spoke out honestly against the war. And the people of Georgia seized all his property, his goods, his trading houses, and they hunted him down like a wounded deer to throw him into prison or to shoot him. He escaped them and fled, penniless and old and friendless. I have heard that he set out for Scotland, hidden in the hold of a ship. But I do not know if that be true—or whether he died of hunger and exposure in some Georgian swamp. He loved me as I think few fathers love their sons; yet he gave me up to this barbarous degenerate life that is a million times worse than death, to save men, women and children, who were strangers to him, from the horrors of a massacre. I have told you how the people of Georgia repaid Lachlan McGillivray for his sacrifice."

"That was terrible, Alex: it was terrible," Lachlan's voice was hardly more than a whisper; his face was white.

"I have made it terrible for them! I have fought them in Creek feathers and in a British uniform. After Britain made peace I fought them in a Span-

ish uniform. Now it will amuse me, perhaps, to fight them in an American uniform."

"An American uniform!" the boy gasped. "Alex! Ye're mad!"

"Not at all. Every year I have sent to Philadelphia a statement of the debt owing to my father. And at last the answer has come. The Government at Philadelphia concludes that the people have paid me enough in blood. They are willing now to pay in money. They invite me to confer with Congress and with President Washington. They will discuss with me the question of paying me in full for my father's confiscated property with the interest accruing. They offer me the title of Brigadier-General in the American Army. To-morrow, Laklan Chate, we start for Pensacola, where we will take ship for Philadelphia!"

CHAPTER XIII

LACHLAN SEES WASHINGTON

A COMMITTEE of welcome met the ship when she docked at Philadelphia and escorted McGillivray, Lachlan, and the warriors who accompanied them, to their lodgings in the home of a wealthy and estimable Quaker named Gwyneth. Running Bear, the War Leader, led McGillivray's party, which included Blue Arrow and Barking Water and a number of young braves of the same age. In fact, with the exception of Running Bear, McGillivray had taken only four of the older Creek warriors. When Lachlan had asked him why he had brought only youths, Alex had answered lightly:

"Because they are young they will enjoy seeing new and strange sights."

In Pensacola there had been some profound consultations about Oomy and Susanna, who had come with Gypsy John to Florida in the chief's escort party. Much as Susanna disliked travel—and her frequent balkings had kept the government vessel sent to meet McGillivray tossing in Pensacola bay for an extra week—McGillivray had feared to leave Gypsy John in the Creek town. John was a white man, he spoke almost no Creek; and the chief Medi-

cine Man was very jealous of him because John now had all the honors as high priest to the Turtle-god and spiritual confidant of Most-Sacred-Mule. So Alex had insisted that John and his two friends go to Pensacola, where they would be safe. Lachlan wanted them to continue with the party to Philadelphia. He could not bear to think of the bitter disappointment which Oomy's absence would cause President Washington, not to speak of Congress. The Creeks also wanted Oomy to go on with them and bless their unusual adventure into the white enemy's stronghold. But McGillivray thought that the sea-trip would be easier for every one without Susanna; and he knew that if any accident occurred aboard ship to either the Turtle-god or Most-Sacred-Mule, there would be another Creek panic. No, he declared the best place for Oomy, Susanna, and Gypsy John was on the pleasant estate of his trading partner, Mr. Leslie, at Pensacola. Flies for Oomy of all varieties—blue-bottle, house, horse, fire and dragon flies—were abundant; there were grass and water and tree-shade for Susanna; and friendly Spanish servants would warm Gypsy John's heart by talking to him in his own language. The expedition would pick up this all-important trio on the return journey.

"Ye remember how Miró laughed so hard when Valdez brought Oomy to New Orleans that he gave Gypsy John his freedom an' made Oomy a citizen o' Louisiana? Maybe if ye'd take Oomy to Philadelphia he'd set George Washington an' John Adams

off laughin' so hard they'd give ye all ye're askin' for—an' maybe elect Oomy to Congress as first member an' representative o' the Creeks," had been Lachlan's final plea, and it, too, had failed! So they were at the Capital without Oomy.

"'Tis an awful grand town, is Philadelphia!" Lachlan exclaimed with awe, as they drove towards the Gwyneth home. The houses of red pressed brick, the orderly streets; the lamp-posts; the well-dressed people who had gathered in the main thoroughfare to see the terrible Creek chieftain, the scourge of the southern colonies; the ships in the river; all these impressed the boy tremendously.

"'The happy, the peaceful, the elegant, the hospitable and polite city of Philadelphia,' as John Adams has called it," said McGillivray. "Perhaps some day you will see Edinburgh and Paris. Those are real cities."

"Is it possible thee has seen the cities thee names?" Mr. Gwyneth, who was driving with them, asked, amazed.

"I was educated in those cities, sir."

The old Quaker peered at the Creek chief from under his broad-brimmed hat.

"Friend, thee astounds me," he said. In a tactful manner he began to question McGillivray about his youth abroad; and presently they were in a discussion of the Latin classics.

"Three hundred volumes!" Gwyneth exclaimed presently. "To think of a library of three hundred books in the depths of the Indian country!"

"By reading I escape from myself for a brief while, at least, sir: and, by escaping myself, perhaps I escape madness."

"Yet, there is not a little madness in the classics!" the old Quaker smiled.

"You know the phrase, sir—*'similia similibus curantur!'*"

"What does that mean?" Lachlan asked, interestedly.

Mr. Gwyneth replied, with a kindly smile:

"My lad, it means, 'like things are cured by like;' or, as we say in English more briefly, 'like cures like.' Thee should have thy father teach thee Latin. Ah! here is my house; and its door stands open with all the hospitable welcome of my heart."

Having led his guests inside, Mr. Gwyneth put them in charge of his two sons and hastened off to see his friend, the President. He was full of the marvels of the extraordinary Creek chief and eager to impart them. He found Washington closeted with a handsome, graceful man in early middle life and was presently acknowledging an introduction to General Wilkinson.

"Well, friend Gwyneth, you seem to be agog with news," said Washington, smilingly. "Pray let us hear it."

"I came for that purpose." True to the Quaker custom, he employed no title in addressing the President. "Friend George, thee will find in the Creek chief a miracle among men; a savage so well educated that he discusses Latin with excerpts from the

classics; a red man who, but for his paint and feathers, shows no more of Indian blood than may be perceived in thy own countenance or in mine."

"This is truly a miracle," Washington agreed. "What more have you discovered in him?"

"He possesses an atticism of diction, aided, as I have said, by a liberal education, a great fund of wit and humor meliorated by a perfect good nature and politeness."

"His perfect good nature, dear friend, has cost more lives than can be counted."

"In talking with him one cannot believe that. His son accompanies him—an intelligent charming lad as white as any boy in this city."

"His son?" Wilkinson queried. "It seems to me that I have heard of this boy—that he is McGillivray's son by adoption. I met the chief himself once on the occasion of a treaty; but you, sir," with a graceful bow and a flattering tone, "have learned much more of him than my eyes were able to see." Turning to the President, he added, "Since McGillivray and I have met more or less as foes in the past, might it not be a tactful thing for me to call on him now—as the representative of the Army? Such things, trivial in themselves, flatter these red savages. He might be in a better mood because of it; and your negotiations with him later on be more successful."

"I think that an excellent idea, General."

"Then, since there is no time like the present, I will go at once—with your permission?"

"By all means, General."

Wilkinson lost no time before paying that call. He had been disturbed enough when he learned that the White Leader had come, in person, to put forward his claims for compensation. For several years Wilkinson had acted as the White Leader's agent in this matter, and, for his own treacherous purposes, he had not presented Alex's letters, but had made altogether preposterous claims which Congress would never grant. He wanted White Alex to continue to be an enemy of America and an ally of Spain. Of course, Wilkinson had not appeared personally in connection with McGillivray's business. He had acted through one of his tricky henchmen who intrigued for him among the politicians at the Capital, even as Nolan and Powers did another sort of work for him in the wilderness. Now, the last thing he had ever feared had happened. White Alex had communicated directly with the Government and, in response to overtures from them, had come to Philadelphia. And, as another stroke of bad fortune, he had brought Lachlan Douglas of Nashville, the boy whom both Powers and Nolan had failed to kill, the boy who knew too much! McGillivray and Lachlan had arrived, too, at the worst of all moments for James Wilkinson. The result of years of intrigue was almost within his grasp; in fact, that very morning the President had given him grounds for believing that he was to be elevated to the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Army. In some way, by bribes or by terrorism, he

must silence those two inopportune visitors from the Creek country!

McGillivray shook hands with Wilkinson quite cordially and invited him to be seated.

"You remember my son, Lachlan," he said, indicating the boy who stood near the window staring at Number Thirteen with an expression of undisguised contempt.

"To be sure. A clever lad who will make the most of his stay in the Capital, undoubtedly." The compliment did not lessen Lachlan's hostility in the least. Wilkinson thought it best to ignore Lachlan's attitude. He plunged into his business with McGillivray at once.

"I came as soon as I heard of your arrival, so that we might agree on a course of action and run no risk of injuring each other," he began. McGillivray bowed gravely, but said nothing. "Since any reference to our former meetings in New Orleans would be perilous——"

"Perilous to General Wilkinson. Yes. I have considered that point."

"To yourself, also. To your business with Congress," Wilkinson went on earnestly. "The Government will hesitate to pay the sum you demand if they get an inkling of your alliance with Miró."

McGillivray regarded Wilkinson for a moment in silence, with his most cynical expression.

"The matter which troubles you, General, is not whether or no my just claims are settled," he said at last. "You want to make sure of my silence about

your own position as Miró's agent. You have more at stake now even than before. Am I not correct in my conjecture?"

Wilkinson looked startled.

"What do you mean? How can you have heard—?" He sprang up and began to pace the floor. McGillivray watched him closely.

"I have my own avenues of information, General. Our time is so short; we may be interrupted at any moment. It will serve you best to be frank with me!"

Secretly McGillivray was wondering just what was Wilkinson's game now. That Wilkinson should come to see him in order to induce him to be silent about something which would injure himself if he mentioned it, struck him as absurd. Obviously then, something new had happened to Wilkinson which made McGillivray's silence far more vital than ever before, and which shook Wilkinson out of his habitual coolness. He had thrown out that remark which had so startled Wilkinson merely as a "feeler." He had in fact no special "avenues of information."

Wilkinson's face flushed with excitement. He began to talk to himself rather than to his antagonist as he paced up and down. "It is settled then, absolutely settled! It must be, if you have heard of it! This morning the President hinted—even more than hinted—yes—yes—it must indeed be final! Commander-in-Chief! This hour is worth all I have wormed through to reach it! No one shall stop me now!"

"Commander-in-Chief and Number Thirteen," McGillivray said ironically.

Wilkinson wheeled on him with sudden fury. "It will cost your life and the life of that precious son of yours to mention that, McGillivray! And my hand will never appear in it!"

The White Leader's eyes flamed. He rose and stopped Wilkinson in the midst of his excited egotistical stride. Wilkinson tried to outstare him but his eyes fell away from McGillivray's. No one cared to meet that look of White Alex's; as Wewoca had once said, men were more afraid of White Alex's eyes than of his knife.

"We are becoming accustomed to your modes of sudden death in our family, Number Thirteen," Alex said, contemptuously. "There, for instance, stands my son, the destined victim first of Powers, then of Nolan. He is, as you see, very much alive. And so am I. Perhaps Valdez still lives, and Nolan also; but where is Powers?" At that Wilkinson started. McGillivray went on:

"Vengeance is my dearest passion. Do you wish to challenge it again? Or does Number Thirteen prefer to make terms with the White Leader?"

Undeniably both men, ambitious and vain as they were, had not a little of the theatrical in their make-up; but McGillivray, having a far more forceful personality, carried it off more convincingly as well as more picturesquely.

"Sit down," he said curtly; and, after an instant's hesitation, Wilkinson obeyed. Lachlan watched the

scene, breathless with excitement. His emotions were playing such havoc with him that he could hardly restrain a shout of laughter when he saw Wilkinson sink into a chair at White Alex's command.

"He feels like Susanna when she balks," he said huskily to McGillivray in Creek. "I think this man will be a poor sort of war leader for the Americans. Instead let us give them Wewoca." McGillivray made a gesture towards him for silence.

"I have nothing to fear from you, Wilkinson; because I have nothing to lose," he continued. "But you have much to fear from me. Since you are to be appointed Commander-in-Chief, it is evident that you have powerful friends here. The day after to-morrow, in the afternoon, I am to consult with President Washington and certain of his advisors. You have, therefore, forty-eight hours in which to visit your very powerful friends and inform them that my claims must be granted to the last penny."

"It will be difficult," Wilkinson protested.

"Nevertheless, you will succeed. Because you dare not fail. There is no need to prolong this interview; and, for you, time is pressing." He rose. "Lachlan, kindly open the door for General Wilkinson." Lachlan leaped to obey with the greatest alacrity. He had enjoyed the scene immensely. There was only one thing that troubled him. As he saw it, Alex had made a pact with Number Thirteen not to tell what he knew about him if Wilkinson succeeded in getting the Government to meet Alex's

claims. This pact was binding on him, too, as Alex's son. Therefore he could not tell the President the truth about Number Thirteen as he had planned to do. He spoke of this to Alex.

"You were going to act again without telling me. I thought the two wise owls always flew together nowadays," McGillivray said with a hint of reproach in his voice. "Did you not tell Robertson when you were in Nashville?"

"Ay; ye know I did. But Jim didn't believe it. He thought 'twas all fancy."

"Yet Robertson has known you all your life. Then why do you think that Washington, who has not even seen you yet, would believe you when you told him?"

"But Alex!" the boy cried out, "'tis verra bad when men canna believe what 'tis terrible important for them to know!"

McGillivray shrugged his shoulders and laughed his short bitter laugh. "Human intelligence is best symbolized by our dear Susanna. It balks whenever it is asked to march!"

Interminable as they seemed to the boy, the two days passed. The hour came when he stood with McGillivray, who looked very handsome and soldierly in the uniform of a Brigadier-General, in the presence of the greatest man of those times. He paid little attention to what was said: the speeches of greeting, the discussion of clauses in the treaty, and so forth. His eyes wandered from Washington to the others whose names he had vaguely heard on

Robertson's lips. These men were not all of them members of Washington's administration. They had gathered to see the strange and baleful chieftain, who had drenched the frontier with blood, yet who looked like an aristocrat among white men and spoke like a scholar. Men, whom Lachlan had never dreamed of seeing, shook his hand and said kind words to him: Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton and, best of all, Washington himself. He was glad that Wilkinson, who was also present, knew better than to offer to shake hands with him. He would keep silent, because of Alex's pact, but he would not touch the hand of Number Thirteen! The traitor, acting under the pressure of the White Leader's threat, had succeeded where he dared not fail—the claims presented by McGillivray would be paid. Lachlan's supreme moment came when Washington beckoned him to his side.

"I am interested in your son, General McGillivray," he said, giving the White Leader his new military title. "He seems an unusually intelligent boy. And his face bespeaks a fine and honest character. May I ask what plans you have for his education?"

McGillivray's face was sombre as he answered: "President Washington would say that life in the Indian towns is not the life best fitted to bring out the noblest qualities of a white man. That is true. In the years when the Americans were my foes and not my friends, as they have now become through this treaty, I hoped to wipe even the memory of

them from the land and to leave to my son a red empire. But I have seen how strong a people the Americans are to-day. I have seen this city and I know it is but one of many; and that many more will arise, spreading over the wilderness, until they have driven the red men beyond the last haunts of the setting sun and into the oblivion of an eternal night. And so I have changed my plan for my son. I will send him from me and from the Creek people to be educated as I was among white men—but not to come back, as I came back."

"That is wise, I think, General McGillivray. And you, lad—what is your name?"

"Lachlan, sir," the boy stammered, blushing.

"Shall you like that?"

"Oh, ay. I'll like fine to be educated. But 'tis not for Alexander McGillivray to say he'll part wi' me forever. It takes two to make such a partin'. An' I'll never be one o' them two!"

"You love your father, then?"

"Ay! To be sure I love Alex McGillivray. For I'm the only man, white or red, that truly knows the White Leader. We're grand friends, White Alex an' me."

Washington turned, with his grave smile, from the boy to McGillivray. "General McGillivray, I believe that your son has given you the best testimonial a father could have—namely, that you and he are grand friends."

Washington went on to tell Lachlan of his own adventures as a boy: how he too loved the frontier,

and how, at sixteen, he had gone as a surveyor into the wilderness along the Rappahannock.

After supper Lachlan chattered enthusiastically about it all to Alex, until his own yawns stopped him. He was glad, he said sleepily, that they would spend another week in Philadelphia, and also that they were going to New York and would spend some time there, too— "It's rare fun to be seein' strange sights, Alex."

That same evening in a house not far away James Wilkinson and Philip Nolan sat in conference. Wilkinson showed the strain he had undergone. He was nervous; all his suavity was lost in irritation.

"You have a month's headway, if you start immediately. You will reach the frontier before they have left New York," he said, tapping his fingers restlessly on the table. "You can have money to any amount you need. Engage as many helpers as you think you require. But, this time, don't fail! McGillivray himself, as well as the boy, has now become a continual menace to me. They must be silenced!"

"I can do that," Nolan answered confidently. "I will hire a number of Choctaw and lie in wait for McGillivray on his way home from Pensacola. Not far from the Creek towns there is a huge tangled swamp. It is about three miles long by the path that skirts it. It's a bad place, full of quicksand, with an awful drag to it. I've seen it shaking like the promise of a volcano; it's said to shoot gushers sometimes. The Creeks call it Quaking Earth. They

have a lot of superstitions about it. That's the place for me and my Choctaw to fall on McGillivray. The path is narrow. White Alex's party will have to walk in single file. And we'll be well hidden; the cover's thick."

"Here's to Quaking Earth!" said Wilkinson with a nervous brittle laugh.

CHAPTER XIV

RINGO-DINGO

"You know, Laklan Chate, it really surprised me to see how impressed you were by the white men in their towns," said Barking Water.

"And you were *not* impressed, Wewoca?" Lachlan tossed a fragment of bread over the rail of the ship and watched delightedly the swoop of the gulls towards it. Their white wings flashed with almost a crystal brightness between the intense still blue of the sky and the wavering deeper sapphire of Pensacola Bay. The ship had come to anchor but McGillivray was waiting for the special boat which would be sent for him by his partner, Mr. Leslie.

"No. Many things impress the unthinking man, which the intelligent man, on the contrary, immediately sees to be very foolish. What foolishness I saw in those two towns: first in Chilleedellee and then in Nooee Orkee!" Wewoca's tongue was forced to give Creek terminations to all new words, and it positively refused to adapt itself to some consonants. "While the houses were often large, they were so stupidly designed that they took much time and labor in building. The Creek houses are much better. What stupidity, too, in large boats,

such as this one! You tell me there is good land all the way here from Nooee Orkee. Then why travel in these big boats which make sick even the most intelligent and warlike men? The white men knew already that the sea was rough and would toss the boats; then why did they make boats to go on the rough sea?"

"They were not afraid of the rough sea." Lachlan felt obliged to put in a word for his race.

"It is not a question of being afraid, but of being comfortable, and of not losing much good food. Then again, while you thought in your foolishness that the white men were strong and were like chiefs in those towns, I saw that the only chiefs were the black men, like my father of whom I have told you."

"The black men?" Lachlan remembered the colored servants or slaves who had been largely in evidence in Philadelphia.

"Yes. I saw so many that I began to look for my father, thinking he must surely be one of them. You did not notice how the white men could do nothing for themselves but were wholly dependent on the black men. They had no food, till the black men brought it to them. When they wished to go out, the black men gave them hats. The black men brought carriages and drove wherever they wished, and the white men sat in the carriages and went where the black men took them!"

"White Alex's man Zambo is black also; but you know he is a slave, not a chief."

"I thought of that at once, being intelligent. But I

observed. And I saw in Chilleedellee it was not the same thing as in Chattahoochee and other Creek towns. How does a wise man know a master from a slave?"

"Well, how *does* he?" Lachlan gave it up.

"By the food! Zambo does not go out hunting, Laklan Chate. The Creek warriors and chiefs go out and kill the food and bring it home. It is *their* food. White Alex kills food and gives it to Zambo or to women, to cook. That proves Zambo a slave and not a chief. But in Chilleedellee I saw, every day, the black men go out with baskets and bring in their food and cook it before the white men even saw it. Then, being a generous people, they gave some of it to the helpless white men. By the food, Laklan Chate, one may always know the master from the slave."

"I see. What else did you learn there?" Lachlan smothered a chuckle.

"I learned my future. It was as if I had had a vision, such as we were supposed to have when we were fasting to become warriors. Yet nothing ghostly. It was perhaps rather a great idea than a vision. Did you not observe that I spent most of my time in the kitchen of the house where we lodged?"

"You always spend most of your time in the kitchen, wherever you are," Lachlan retorted with a giggle.

"Ah, but formerly it only interested me to *taste* food. But when I saw the power these black men

had achieved through their mastery of food, I learned all they could teach me about choosing and cooking it. When we are at home again, Laklan Chate, I will make a fish soup or a meat stew with wild onions in it and gravy made with browned flour. And you will see that I have become one of the black Great Food Chiefs. I will be very famous; for I will be the only Great Food Chief in the country of the Creeks. This has happened to me because, when I made a strange journey, I was not amazed and bewildered but intelligent."

"You are indeed a marvelous man, Wewoca. I begin to admire you extravagantly," Lachlan said, gravely. Wewoca received the compliment in a dignified manner and said kindly:

"That was inevitable, Laklan Chate; for you also are intelligent in your degree, though not as I am. It is not your fault that your race is less clever and well-instructed than mine. With my friendship and my willingness to give you information about all the things which we shall see together, your inferiority —which is due only to your race—will hardly be noticed." He patted Lachlan affectionately on the shoulder.

Mr. Leslie of the famous Panton-Leslie Company, now owned chiefly by McGillivray, came alongside presently and took off the Creek party in his large handsomely painted and canopied boat. He was a stout and florid Scot, about sixty years old, with a brisk, rather boisterous manner and an almost continual chuckle; a very contented and jolly man.

"Leslie, I am as you know, thrifty; but I would willingly give ten pounds to see you glum for once, merely to see how you would look," said White Alex humorously.

"Ha ha; very good, Alex; ha ha. But you never will. Formerly it might have been possible, but never again. An inexhaustible source of chuckles has recently opened at my very threshold, so to speak."

"You stir my curiosity."

"Yes, ha ha—ha. You'll see him presently. My new coachman. A big jet black fellow I took in trade from Señor Ramirez of Tampa. A very ox for strength, black as tar, oily black, a shining black Colossus—! On my word, Alex, I believe I never saw anything truly black till I saw Ringo-Dingo. That's what we call him. It is the refrain of a song he sings. A huge, rollicking, shouting, singing, laughing bit of tar, come up out of some African lake of pitch, head first on the crest of a gusher—ha ha—ha ha, and never lost the momentum, ha ha. Comical creature: nearly sends me laughing to my grave twenty times a day. Oh, Ringo-Dingo, Ringo-Dingo: ha ha."

"I want to see him," Lachlan said, laughing too.

"He is waiting for us with the coach. Good driver. Horses like him. The dogs too. Makes them laugh probably: ha ha. Wait till you see his livery. Chose it himself. A scarlet hunting coat, a pair of white cotton trunks, an enormous palmetto hat dyed bright yellow, great, bare, black legs and

feet, rings in his nose and his ears, a thick woolly pigtail, ha ha. He's the scandal of Pensacola; but I won't alter a thing—not a thingo—Ringo-Dingo. Ha ha."

The scarlet coat was the most conspicuous thing on shore. It came towards them flapping away from the gigantic bare ebony torso of Mr. Leslie's coachman.

"Behold another of your notable black chiefs," Blue Arrow remarked to Barking Water. But Wewoca had already seen. From his throat came a guttural, strangulated yell; his eyes rolled and bulged; he shook with the tempest of his emotions.

"It is he! It is Big Laugh! It is Black Thunder! My father, my father!" he shouted hoarsely in the Seminole dialect. Ringo-Dingo stopped short and stared down at the black rolypoly boy who was fairly in contortions as he pranced and gasped: "It is I, Wewoca, your son. I am the son of Big Laugh and the Seminole woman who was kinswoman to the Creeks. I am Wewoca, your son!"

"Wewoca!" the big black man exclaimed. "It is true that I do remember having a son by that name. Are you really he?"

"Even I, who am very intelligent, would not know my name of Wewoca if I were not your son!" Barking Water declared.

"True. You are my son." They embraced enthusiastically. "Call me now by my new name, Ringo-Dingo, which my master has given me."

"Ringo-Dingo," Wewoca repeated it approvingly.

"Now, Ringo-Dingo, listen well to me; for I have much information and am very clever and also good-natured. Do not call that white-haired man your master. That is a mistake. What do you do for him?"

"I drive the coach. I go to the ship and to the store with messages on pieces of white stuff that tears easily. I bring back coconuts and such things. I dance and sing for him and his friends. How can I repeat all I do for him? Why do you ask?"

"Because by doing these things which he is not clever enough to do for himself and, above all, by bringing the food, you become the chief and the master."

Ringo-Dingo stared at him. "You are indeed clever, Wewoca! I would never have thought of that. I am not a slave but a master! Oh, ringo-dingo, ringo-dingo, do!" He began to sing loudly, shuffling his feet in a dance.

"Ha ha! See the fellow, Alex! Ha ha!" Mr. Leslie gave the order to start, and, chuckling, bundled into the coach with Lachlan, McGillivray and Blue Arrow. Wewoca sprang upon the box beside his father; and away they went at a brisk trot through the town towards Mr. Leslie's estate about two miles out. The rest of the party, under Running Bear's leadership, followed on foot. They would set out for the Creek country the next day; but McGillivray and the three boys would remain for a week in Pensacola.

"Imagine what a satisfaction it is to me to find

my fierce black father again; and to learn that he is not a slave to lean, and evil, fly-eating Spaniards, but a master and a chief in the house of a white man," Wewoca said to Lachlan, later. "Like those I saw in Chilleedellee—only much greater. In Chilleedellee the black chiefs had no scarlet coats but were dressed much like the inferior white men and had the legs covered and wore hard black boxes on their feet. They wore no nose nor earrings, nor great yellow hats. Even your supreme white chief, Goehee Washeeto——"

"George Washington," Lachlan corrected.

"So I said. Even he wore no nose and earrings; and his hat was not yellow nor in any way remarkable. Laklan Chate, though I may never see my father again, since I will soon leave him and go to the Creek country, I shall never feel sorrow, only pride, in thinking of him. For I see quite plainly that Chief Ringo-Dingo, after having conquered all the Spaniards, whom he detested—they were, in fact, the only things on earth which did not amuse him—has now become the greatest man in the world."

"That was to be expected, Wewoca. He has *you* for his son," Lachlan said solemnly.

"I too have thought of that," Barking Water admitted modestly.

That night Mr. Leslie held a grand barbecue in the fields of his estate for the Creek warriors. Cattle and sheep were roasted in the pits, and also magnificent fishes such as tarpon, Spanish mackerel, an !

pompano. But it is doubtful if any dish was more prized than the immense tarpon stew which Barking Water prepared, with its tang of wild garlic and hot and sweet peppers and tomatoes, and with mashed yams to thicken the sauce. Cooks, it is averred, can be made; but there are also born cooks whose genius needs no instruction. Set down in a new land with strange vegetables all about them, born cooks will, by instinct, blend flavors and substances deliciously. Barking Water was one of these born cooks. At the end of the feast, just before the entertainment began, the White Leader rose and made an address to his warriors.

"When I brought you from the Creek towns, youths of my nation, my son asked me why only very young men accompanied me. Running Bear also said: 'Why not more of the older warriors?' But I did not give my son and Running Bear a true answer. I must wait and see how the Great White Chief of the Americans would answer me; whether with the clasp of peace or with the bared knife. I saw the White Chief of the Americans; and our hands clasped for peace. The knife is sheathed, the arrows are broken and the tomahawk is buried in the earth. Now I will tell you why I took the youth of my nation to the towns of the Americans. I tell it to you, the young Creeks, some of whom have never yet shed white men's blood—for many of you had shed no blood when the Turtle-god cursed us for Tustunnuc's treachery before the gate of Nashville. I took you, so that you might see for your-

selves, while your blades are yet clean, how powerful a people the Americans have become. So that, if you choose, as you grow older you can continue to be friends and allies of the Americans. I shall pass soon; all the older warriors who have fought the Americans will pass soon. But you, the youths, will remain for many more years; and you will guide the counsels of the Four Nations of the mighty Muskogee. It is for you to remember and to tell others what you have seen of the power of these people; and that they cannot now be driven from the land. I counsel you, youths, to continue in friendship with the Americans and to learn their ways and customs; that the Creeks may remain in the land. So that you might see, I took you: I took you, the youths, whose blades are yet clean; you, the youths, to whom belongs the promise and the peril of To-morrow when the White Leader shall have passed forever."

For a few minutes no one spoke. At last one of the youths rose and said:

"We have seen the strong towns of those people. We have not shed their blood. The youths will remember the counsel of the White Leader."

This interlude of solemnity over, the entertainment began with a wildly comical dance by Ringo-Dingo. He accompanied himself with a bone rattle; and every now and again shouted his favorite refrain: "Oh! Ho! Ringo-dingo, ringo-dingo—do! oh!" Wewoca was immensely proud of himself and his father that night. Gypsy John sang some of his

fierce and mournful songs from Venezuela. And the warriors did a somewhat modified version of Barking Water's delight, the *Obungah Hahjo.* Susanna, marvelous to relate, consented agreeably to be led by Gypsy John about the grounds, with Oomy in his basket on her back. And the warriors marched round and round her, chanting their praises to the Turtle-god and to Most-Sacred-Mule for granting to the White Leader and to the Four Nations of the Creeks a peace forever with the Americans.

"Now you know why I took only the young braves with me to Philadelphia," the White Leader said to Lachlan. "They have no hate to carry on. As to myself, my hate will die when I go to the dust. There would have been no white man's republic in this land but for the colonial traders who, by their honest dealing, their intelligence, and their courage, kept the red men quiet for long periods while the little weak colonies grew. Those traders were always the first victims when the Indians did rise. They sacrificed for the colonists without reward or thanks. Since the first colonies of English were planted here, the Spaniards and the French have worked together to overthrow them, to wipe them out, by means of the Indian's tomahawk. Only the colonial traders prevented a general confederacy of the border tribes in alliance with the Spaniards and the French. My father's friend, James Adair, kept the Chickasaw friendly with the English. Another friend, Sir William Johnson, held the powerful Iroquois from alliance with the French; as my father

first, then I myself for years, held the Creeks back from the Spanish. Adair divided the great Choctaw nation, which had been, before, wholly in the French interest. And he, also, won the Cherokee to the English—taking every risk, making sacrifices, without reward or thanks. No, Laklan Chate; my hatred is undimmed toward those who wronged Lachlan McGillivray. He knew almost certainly that the Creeks, already on the warpath, would kill him when he hastened into their country to make that appeal to them. Only because I was there and they took a liking to me, did they spare him—and all Georgia. The ruin of my life saved the life of my father as well as the lives of several hundred settlers. That it did save *his* life has been my only consolation. I paid a hideous price in giving up the white man's life of the mind for the beastlike life of a savage. I have been no man, but a wolf and a viper. Till you came, I had nothing of joy; nothing but the memory that I had saved my father from death once, so long ago. I have loved only two human beings, my father and you; and both have been worthy of my loving." He paused, then added thoughtfully, "After all—that is much."

CHAPTER XV

QUAKING EARTH

A WEEK later McGillivray and his small party, with Oomy and Susanna, set out for home. Mr. Leslie, though he was plump and sixty, was a good walker: and he went along five miles or so "to see you safely on your way, Alex," as he said. Ringo-Dingo went too, of course, walking beside his son whom he esteemed as the most profoundly wise of all profoundly wise men who had ever lived. In fact, there was only one cause for dispute in that family; namely, which was the greater man, Ringo-Dingo or Wewoca? Barking Water said it was Ringo-Dingo; and Ringo-Dingo said it was Barking Water.

"But for your intelligence, my son, I should never have known that I am a great chief; not a slave," was Ringo-Dingo's clinching argument.

"But for your wonderful blackness I would never have been born of that most intelligent color," was Wewoca's. Then, with brows wrinkled by the problem, they would nod solemnly at each other. It was, so to speak, a deadlock.

"That a skin should be so important!" Ringo-Dingo would exclaim, after the interval of solemn

nodding silence, rubbing a finger down his glossy leg inquiringly.

"It holds the man!" Wewoca would reply with dramatic finality.

This morning Ringo-Dingo broke away from Wewoca's side every few minutes to dash ahead and turn a succession of cartwheels. He loved to hear the shouts of laughter which followed. At last the hour of parting came. Mr. Leslie shook hands with White Alex and Lachlan; and Ringo-Dingo and Wewoca embraced. Tears ran down Wewoca's face and the huge black man shook with sobs.

"It is the parting of Supreme Food Chief from Supreme Horse Chief," said Wewoca huskily but proudly.

"My clever son! My most wise son!" Ringo-Dingo gulped down his grief as best he could. "Give me the two red feathers from your headband to keep in memory of you. I will give you my hat."

"Oh, no! Not this beautiful hat which is like no other hat I ever saw, even in Chilleedellee!" Wewoca exclaimed, appalled at the magnitude of his sire's generosity.

"Yes! Yes! I can get another hat of palmetto. There are many in Florida. And, in the coach house, there is more of the yellow paint; they use it for the wheels of the coach. I will paint a new hat and put your red feathers in it." He plucked the feathers from Wewoca's band and then thrust the huge yellow hat on his son's head. It came down

to Wewoca's mouth; he saw faintly through the thinly woven straw crown.

"Even like this great hat, do sorrow and night dim the eyes, my father," he said mournfully.

"Take—my—hat—!" Ringo-Dingo repeated, sobbing again. "My son and my hat—my black son and my yellow hat!" He stuck in a red feather at each side of his woolly pigtail. Wewoca pushed the hat up until his eyes showed, and blinked at Ringo-Dingo with devoted admiration.

"I shall make a wide band to fit inside the hat, so that it will not cover me like a tent, but will be simply a hat," he said. "May my feathers give you the speed of birds, my father! Now, farewell, Ringo-Dingo." Presently Ringo-Dingo and Mr. Leslie were lost to view round a turn in the path. McGillivray's party went on towards the Creek towns. It was a slow march, chiefly on account of Susanna, whose conduct worried Gypsy John very much.

"I don't know why Susanna she like that," he said to Lachlan. "Oomy too; he want all time get out the basket and go down in the mud. Like he want hide. Susanna she not so mad, like when she go Nashville. No. Susanna more like she scared. She look like she see something; but me I not can see it. I think Oomy an' Susanna scared; an' so me, I get scared."

" 'Tis the heat," Lachlan answered. "I never saw air so still an' so heavy. 'Tis like a thunder-storm is comin'. Wewoca says he feels scared, too. Even

White Alex says he never felt anything like this."

"In Venezuela, my country, when it all same like this, then it make terrible shakes all over the ground an' houses fall down."

"Earthquake weather," said McGillivray thoughtfully. "It would not be so odd if we had a shock here. But it might lose the trail for us through Quaking Earth swamp. The swamp is supposed to have come into existence after a terrible storm and a series of quakes about a hundred years ago. The Creeks say their old men have told them that where Quaking Earth is there was formerly a river. Then all one day and night the ground shook terribly and wind, rain, thunder and lightning tore through the land. When the disturbance had passed, the river had become much narrower and there was a swamp, jetting mud fountains into the air. Then the water subsided and the place looked, in a few years, as you have seen it, a dangerous enough swamp of quicksand and tangled reed growth. It must be very deep with a curiously powerful under-drag. I have seen it claim two of its victims, a pack horse and a man. They went down fast."

"That's a verra horrible death," Lachlan said with a shudder.

White Alex regarded him sombrely. "The truly horrible thing, Laklan Chate, is to live long, seeing the fine things in your own heart and your own mind go down one by one—down—down—in a strangle of hatred and vengeance and bloodshed. Do not

ever let that happen to you. Keep yourself clean and straight."

That evening they camped two miles south of Quaking Earth.

"This is the longest dawn I ever waited for," said White Alex the next morning.

"Ay; an' the darkest," Lachlan answered.

By five o'clock of that late summer morning the sky shed hardly more light than had been given off during the misted night by a moon red as blood. The change came in a thick yellow cloud which seemed to cover the whole heaven and to drop a haze of minute electric particles over the forest and the swamp. The men were panting before they had been on trail for fifteen minutes, so heavily hot and immovable seemed the air through which they were trying to breathe their way.

"In South America I know what this mean," Gypsy John gasped. "See Oomy. He know, too! Oomy, too, he live long time in South America." Oomy was, indeed, almost standing on his tail in his effort to get out of his basket. A front view of Oomy and Susanna through the distorting thick haze—from, say, a few yards distant—was sufficiently arresting. The basket looked like the huge hump on a camel and turned Susanna into some baleful animal of witchland or old legend. Then, out of the hump, reared Oomy's restless head. The two of them, plus the basket, in that fog of heat and gathering storm, appeared to be one gigantic beast more terrible in aspect than any image or devil-mask

designed by the most fertile-minded Indian witch-doctor.

The swamp opened before them presently. Susanna smelled water and quickened her pace.

"I go first now an' let Susanna drink," Gypsy John said, and took the lead. The others followed in single file along the narrow path. The patches of swamp-growth loomed suddenly here and there through the dense yellowish haze in grotesque shapes that looked black, yet seemed weirdly intangible. The water lay in thick oily sheets reflecting the peculiar ochre-toned half-light filtering from the sky. The rumbles of thunder, which had begun with dawn, grew louder and nearer.

"Queer how it sounds as if 'twas comin' from underground," Lachlan said, huskily. He felt stifled.

"I've heard that sound before, when there was no thunder," McGillivray answered. "I believe this place, especially the lake there to the left, was once really part of the river channel. Some disturbance, an earthquake or a landslide, filled it and diverted the water; just as our old men relate. But underneath, quite probably, the river is forcing its way to the old channel, worrying the sand and undermining the island clumps which are merely heaps from the fallen bank. It would not surprise me to see the river rise here again any year after the flood season and sweep away all this quaking earth and sand and swamp-growth. This trail is higher above the marsh than when I was a boy. The sea-coast is farther inland than it was when the first white men ventured upon

it. The mouths of Mobile and Black Warrior rivers are not now where they were once. All our waters are restless." The last words were lost in a deafening roar from the skies. Fire seemed to run through the thick yellow canopy of cloud above Quaking Earth. With a hissing, gurgling noise, a jet of muddy water shot up through the troubled quicksands.

It was at this moment that Susanna hove through the mists into the view of a dozen Choctaw whom Nolan had stationed on one of the brushwood islands to the left of the path. He himself, with five others, was concealed behind a mass of logs and uprooted trees a few yards farther on. It had never occurred to Nolan to mention Susanna and Oomy to the Choctaw. Like his former unfortunate friend, Valdez, he had made the mistake of ignoring Oomy. If the Choctaw had known that Oomy was the new Turtle-god of the Creeks and that he rode, customarily, on Most-Sacred-Mule, they would not have been utterly dismayed by this sudden appearance of a strangely, diabolically made, supernatural creature, with a large head on its neck and a small head on its hump, bearing down upon them through the terrifying chaos of the storm. It was their misfortune and that of their employer, that the six hunters from their nation had not seen Oomy and Susanna when they encountered some other members of the Creek war party in McGillivray's raid on Nashville. Nolan's band had been unwilling to enter the swamp in the first place, because they had heard it was a haunt of devils

which thrust up arms through the sand and plucked men off the path and pulled them down in swift eddying swirls. And now, with thunders roaring, and jets like arms thrusting up, came this terrible unearthly beast!

Shrieking, in mad panic, these Choctaw—whose special business had been to make sure of the boy, leaving McGillivray to Nolan—threw away their guns and fled, plunging madly into the treacherous mire of the swamp.

"Alex! What's that?" Lachlan gasped.

"An ambush! Wilkinson's work!"

McGillivray caught the boy and thrust him behind Susanna, who had suddenly balked and dug her four hoofs into the ground. Wewoca, his eyes rolling with terror, raised his rifle unsteadily; but McGillivray checked him.

"Don't waste your shot. They are already dead men," he said.

The flashes, recurring more swiftly as the storm swelled, showed the brief frenzied struggle which could have only one end. No human strength could battle successfully with the undertow of Quaking Earth. Those who fought hardest dug their own graves quickest through the shifting sand.

"I think Nolan is somewhere near," said Blue Arrow.

McGillivray, the three boys, and Gypsy John had found cover of a sort. Alex stood behind a tree. Gypsy John and Lachlan were in the lee of Susanna.

Wewoca and Blue Arrow lay flat behind small clumps of earth.

During a lull in the thunder, McGillivray spoke:

"Choctaw! The Turtle-god of the Creeks has cursed you! Therefore Quaking Earth has taken your comrades. Speak. How many are you?"

There was no answer. McGillivray waited till another roll of thunder had passed. "Shall I bid the Turtle-god curse again?" A shot from Nolan's rifle glanced off the tree trunk.

After a brief silence the answer came:

"We are five. We are young warriors."

"Young warriors! You who have not yet been in battle. You have come out to take your first scalps. But why have you unsheathed your scalping knives on the trail of Muskogee who are your friends and allies? Why have you lifted your tomahawks against your brother, the White Leader?"

Again there was a pause before the answer came:

"We have been told that the White Leader has made a pact against us with the Chickasaw, our enemies."

"It is a lie. It is a *white man's* lie. Choctaw, who is the white man with you?" Evidently a consultation was taking place, for there was no response. White Alex smiled grimly. "I don't doubt that Nolan is there," he said to Lachlan. "And I don't envy him. He knows Indians well enough to be reasonably certain that if I can increase the superstitious terrors of his Choctaw, they will throw him into the swamp to save themselves from god-Oomy!

And," he added in his tone of cold vengeful anger, "that is just what I intend they *shall* do."

"There is no white man here," a Choctaw called with uncertain voice.

"He does not sound very sure, does he?" McGillivray muttered in sardonic amusement. "Nolan has fired his last shot with them and missed." He raised his voice: "You lie. The Turtle-god tells me that you have a white man there. His name is Nolan. The Turtle-god will strike you down as he struck down your comrades."

"No! No!" came the frenzied cry. "It was not our lie. The white man made us lie. His name is Nolan!"

"If you obey the Turtle-god, your lives may be spared even yet. Will you obey?"

"Yes! Yes! We will obey the mighty Turtle-god!"

"Then take up the white man, Nolan, who is the cause of all your evil and your fear. *Cast him into Quaking Earth!*"

"You fiend!" Nolan shrieked back at him hoarsely. And White Alex laughed.

A shot cracked. Then all lesser sounds were lost in a volley of thunder which seemed to shake the earth. Whatever fight Nolan was making for his life in that near-by clump of swamp growth, with jetting waters and moiling quicksand on three sides, was hidden and silenced by storm and sulphurous darkness. He knew where the path lay and that he would have a chance of escape if he could reach

it. A flash of lightning showed him presently running along a log, with two Choctaw following him.

"We can't let him get off, Alex!" Lachlan cried. Swinging up his rifle, he sprang erect, dashed out in front of Susanna and waited for another flash to outline his target. But Nolan knew that his game was up. It was impossible for him to break through all the way to safety. He preferred to die by a bullet rather than in the strangling sands of Quaking Earth. And there was a chance, at least, that he could kill one of his foes before he himself perished. He turned and, with raised pistol—for his rifle had been wrested from him—ran towards McGillivray's party. Blue Arrow brought up his rifle and waited for light. But McGillivray, seeing Lachlan's danger, thought of nothing else. He leaped out from cover and flung himself in front of the boy. When the next flash came, Nolan's hand was the quicker; and the ball from his pistol entered White Alex's breast. Before Blue Arrow could fire, a Choctaw had cleft Nolan's skull with a tomahawk. Another fired. The ill-aimed shot drew blood from Lachlan's face as it whistled by. In the dimness, after the flash had passed, McGillivray's men saw a dark mass whirling over and into the swamp. The Choctaw had obeyed the Turtle-god, and thrown Nolan into the quicksands. Then, having appeased their fears of the supernatural, they sped away along the path, on their journey into their own country.

Lachlan, blinded by the stream from his wound,

stood bracing himself against a tree in the effort to hold up McGillivray.

"Don't be sorry," Alex whispered. "I am not—because *you* are safe. Don't go back to the Creeks. Go on to Nashville." Lachlan could not hear other words that McGillivray tried to say. The thunder had increased and seemed, more than before, to roll up from under the earth as well as down from the sky. Wind had come, too, snapping trees in its path like matches. He heard other half-phrases—"Old owl—through the dark—alone."

Then it was as if the world ended. He could not think nor feel in the fury that roared about him, over his head and below his feet. He was conscious only of a terrific struggle which his muscles were too weak to maintain; a struggle, with something monstrous, for possession of Alex's body. The Thing, whatever it was, had hold of Alex by the feet first, then the knees, then the hips. Hands—Blue Arrow's and Gypsy John's—tore his own hands loose, dragged him back, and held him. The Thing had taken Alex, and almost taken him too. He heard Wewoca call on him to look at something. Gypsy John wiped the blood from his face and eyelids.

The whole sky was bright with flame. The swamp, kindled by it, was moving; its waters were no longer stagnant, they were rising and flowing. What had once seemed to be a group of solid islets crumbled, and their growth upheaved and tossed like driftwood. With a final mighty roar the patient river, which so long had plowed unseen, broke

the last barrier underground and reclaimed her old channel. And Quaking Earth went down. The path began to take the form it had had in the beginning—the solid brink of a river gulch. Below him, for one instant, Lachlan saw the body of the man who had hated white men and, in the end, had died for love of one of them. The White Leader's eyes were open. They caught their last light from the sky's terrible splendor, before the swirling waters covered them and him.

Hours longer the little group crouched there, while the thunder slackened and ceased, and the rain fell in torrents. It was near the end of day when they took the trail again.

"I heard my brother say that you must go to Nashville and nevermore return to the Creeks," Blue Arrow said to Lachlan.

"It was not I, your brother, who said so. It was *he*—White Alex. The last thing he said to me. The last thing White Alex will ever say to me," Lachlan answered in a tone that was lifeless from shock and grief.

"Yes. White Alex said it. He was my brother. That was why he told me to take the blood vengeance if Tustunnuc killed him. You remember? Because I was his brother. Now that he is dead I can tell you. He would never name me brother because I was all Creek, an Indian, even though our mother had white blood. When White Alex's father went away, and it was said evil white men had killed him, his wife, Sehoy, married a Creek. I am their son.

The White Leader would not see her any more nor call her children his kinsmen. He never forgave her because she had forgotten Red Lachlan. But I came to his town and yet did not call him my kinsman. So he let me stay. I loved him much, as you also loved him. He had power over the heart. There was no man like White Alex."

"No," said Lachlan, painfully. "There is none."

"It is as if a great flame had been quenched, leaving the place black." Blue Arrow began to murmur, in low tones, the weirdly mournful death-chant of the Creeks. Presently Wewoca took up the strain, then Gypsy John and Lachlan. The minor chant, which was almost a monotone—savage, sorrowful, prophetic—seemed to be less a song made by men than the echo of Nature's forces in turmoil and devastation: the beat of rain on a blood-stained battlefield, the bending wail of pines in a wind of fury, the puma's lonely wavering cry.

Sunrise of the next day saw Lachlan and his friends making a wide detour of the Creek towns, which Laklan Chate himself would never revisit. All were on their way to Nashville; for Blue Arrow and Wewoca had instantly decided to throw in their lot with Lachlan Douglas. Wherever he went they, too, would go. They would never leave him.

CHAPTER XVI

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

SEVERAL years later, on a winter's day, when the crisp surface of the snow seemed to dance in a diamond haze, a huge camp lay outspread at Wood River. The leaders of the expedition had intended to spend the winter in what we call Missouri, then a part of the Louisiana Territory. But while Jefferson had purchased this vast territory with its vague boundaries from Napoleon, who had recently acquired it from Spain, the transfer had not yet been officially made. Therefore the tents of Lewis and Clark were pitched at Wood River, Illinois, on soil that was already American. In the spring the men, most of them young frontiersmen, would go with Lewis and Clark on the great adventure across the continent to the Pacific. By that time the American Commissioners in Louisiana would have formally received the territory for the United States. One of those Commissioners was General James Wilkinson, who—not yet unmasked, still honored by his country—continued as Number Thirteen on the Spanish pay roll.

There was a pleasant stir in camp to-day, because the two captains—as young as most of their party—

were receiving a distinguished guest. The visitor was an old man, famed as an explorer and frontier warrior. It was he who had first explored Kentucky and had led the first caravans over the mountains, thus opening the gateway of the West. His name was Daniel Boone. He had been living for years, now, in a little Spanish hamlet some forty miles away. No one in America felt a greater enthusiasm for the adventure in prospect than he. Then, too, he had known so many of these young men when they were little boys: such as William Clark himself, and those two other younger, but quite as red-headed, lads, Rob and Roy MacPhail, the Scalpin' Scot, and their older brother Andy, the famous scout called Silent Scot, and his no less famous friend, the Indian boy, Tuleko or Runner-on-the-Wind. There, too, was the MacPhails' cousin, Lachlan Douglas, once the adopted son of that White Leader of the Creeks whose name alone had spread terror through Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky for a decade. With Lachlan were two Creeks, his devoted friends, Blue Arrow and Wewoca. Perhaps Wewoca would never shine as either a scout, a hunter or a warrior; but to-day he was supreme in camp. Even the two leaders and the guest of honor were of secondary importance. For Barking Water, as chief cook of the expedition, had prepared such a meal as no table in the wilderness had ever boasted before. There never had been such a cook as Barking Water. Every one agreed about that.

In Wewoca's large cook-tent were gathered the

captains, Lewis and Clark, Boone, the MacPhails including Tuleko, and Lachlan and Blue Arrow. A close bond of memory and association drew this group together. During the Revolution and its aftermath the West had been won and held under the generalship of four friends: by Boone and William Clark's older brother, George Rogers Clark, in Kentucky; and in Tennessee by John Sevier of Watauga, and by James Robertson in Nashville. In the wars, which these four men had fought almost incessantly against British, Spaniards and red men, William Clark, the MacPhails, and Lachlan Douglas had grown up. Something closer than friendship or blood kinship drew them together: an ideal which had inspired them alike and called forth their full measure of strength, intelligence, courage and moral endurance. They, and other comrades of their own stripe, had held the first West, Kentucky and Tennessee; and now they were to blaze the westward trail of empire to the Pacific Ocean. They had defeated the traitor who had undertaken for a price to deliver the first West to Spain; and who waited now in St. Louis to receive for his country the great territory that had once been Spanish.

But their thoughts were not of politics to-day: they were of the present feast, of old adventures on trail and of new ones in the immediate future.

"'Tis a shame Oomy's not goin' to the western sea," Lachlan said regretfully.

"Susanna not like walk so far," Blue Arrow remarked.

"An' she's quite right," said Rob. "Isn't she, Roy?"

"She is, Rob. What I like about Susanna is she's got a mind o' her own."

"Ay, Roy. An' she carries it i' her legs as well as i' her head."

"Where *is* Oomy, by the way?" Boone asked.

"Oomy's visitin' Admiral Tom Shark at John Sevier's," Silent Scot answered.

"Ay. An' ye should see them, the four o' them," Lachlan said. "Sevier gave old One-Eye back his gold to buy a place for himself. 'Tis near to Nolichucky Jack's," he added, giving Sevier his nickname. " 'Tis a nice cabin wi' a blacksmith shop by the road. A couple o' the Renz boys do the shoein' o' the horses. The Admiral's over eighty now an' gettin' lazy. Him an' Gypsy John's as thick as thieves—or pirates! An' both o' them's fair crazy over Oomy an Susanna. Old Rusty, my dog's there, too. Oomy's havin' a wonderfu' time samplin' new flies i' Watauga. He could write a grand book about flies, all the way from Venezuela to New Orleans, an' Chattahoochee an' Nashville, an' Pensacola, an' Watauga. An' Susanna's in clover up to her knees, wi'out a lick o' work to do an' no walkin' but what she feels inclined for. Ay. Ye never saw a happier family than Gypsy John an' Admiral Shark an' Rusty, an' Oomy an'—Most-Sacred-Mule." He broke off in a chuckle.

Barking Water put on a huge, battered, oft-mended, yellow hat and began to serve the food.

Ringo-Dingo's hat was still sacredly important to his son, Supreme Food Chief. He donned it for all ceremonials. In a few moments the group was sunk in that solemn rapt silence which is the highest tribute to a cook. After the meal there was conversation again. Lewis talked admiringly of Jefferson, whose secretary he had been. Lachlan, in a half-lying posture at the door of the tent, was looking out. A tree, which he could not see because it was back of the tent, cast a long blue shadow on the snow. A single shadow like that always set a chord in him vibrating; it sent his mind back vividly to that morning in Miró's garden in New Orleans when he had seen White Alex's shadow fall across the sunlit grass. The shadow of White Alex. . . .

It was always there; it would always be there—across every path of his life—across his heart—moving before him, as if beckoning, in every new adventure of his spirit—the shadow of that mysterious being men had called the White Leader—tragic and terrible—and beloved. The inerasable shadow of White Alex. . . .

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Historical characters appearing or mentioned in the story are Robertson, Sevier, Boone, Lewis, Clark, Wilkinson, Mansker, Alexander McGillivray and his father, Lachlan McGillivray, Adair, Sir William Johnson, Miró, O'Fallon, Nolan and Powers.

The incidents of the Spanish plot, White Alex's hate and its cause, the treachery of Wilkinson, who was Number Thirteen on the list of Spain's secret agents before and while he was Commander-in-chief of the American Army, the repayment to McGillivray by Congress for his father's confiscated property and bestowal on him of the title of Brigadier-General, are historical facts. In the *Colonial Records* of Tennessee and Georgia, Alexander is called Chief Allick, White Allick, and the White Leader. Two men, who knew him, have left the following antagonistic word sketches of him: Robertson said: "The biggest devil among the Spaniards is the half Spaniard, half Frenchman, half Scotchman and altogether Creek scoundrel, McGillivray." A traveler who visited White Alex some years later wrote of him, "He possesses an atticism of diction, aided by a liberal education, a great fund of wit and humor meliorated by a perfect good nature and politeness;"

words which the author has put into the mouth of McGillivray's host in Philadelphia.

This book deals with the history of Tennessee after the Revolution and up to the date of the Louisiana Purchase. Earlier events in Tennessee history; i.e., during the Revolution, are found in *Silent Scot, Frontier Scout,* in which several of the historical and fictional characters in *The White Leader* make their first appearance. MS.

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